

Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei

# East Coast Islands, Kelantan & Terengganu (Chapter)

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# East Coast Islands, Kelantan & Terengganu

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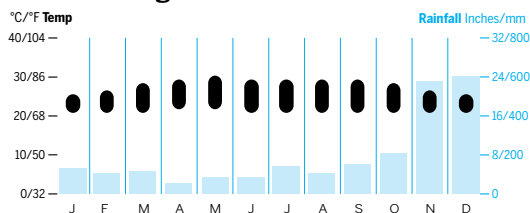
## Why Go?

Though Malaysia's east coast is beautiful, containing many a lovely beach and bucolic *kampung* (village) well worth visiting, what brings folks back to the region time and again are the tantalisingly beautiful islands offshore. 'Paradise' barely does these gems justice, though that'll likely be the word that comes to mind when you first lay eyes on the white sands and swaying palms of the Perhentians or Pulau Kapas. Snorkellers and scuba divers will find the coral and marine life beneath the azure waves second to none.

Cultural travellers, meanwhile, will find in cities like Kota Bharu and Kuala Terengganu a distinctively Malay vibe that's managed to remain fairly undiluted despite the nation's headlong rush to prosperity. And nature lovers will want to spend time exploring the vast and as yet largely untrammelled expanses of jungle that make up much of Kelantan's interior.

## When to Go

### Kuala Terengganu



**Apr–May** Escape the heat in the higher mountainous regions.

**Jun–Aug** Drier weather and Kota Bharu's festivals make summer a great time to visit.

**Nov–Feb** Few options open, but discounts on offer for those braving monsoonal rains.

## KELANTAN

Travellers often rush through Malaysia's northeastern-most state, seeing it as a way-point between Thailand and Pulau Perhentian. Those who don't linger are missing out on both a stronghold of Malay culture and one of Southeast Asia's great cultural blending zones, combining a distinctive blend of Chinese, Indian, Thai and Malay cultures.


### Kota Bharu

POP 425,000

Kota Bharu has the energy of a mid-sized city, the compact feel and friendly vibe of a small town, superb food and a good spread of accommodation. A logical overnight stop between Thailand and the Perhentians, KB is a good base for exploring Kelantan. The state's villages are within day-tripping distance, and its crafts and culture are present in the city itself.


The centre of town is a busy area north-east of the clock tower, bounded by Jln Pintu Pong, Jln Kebun Sultan/Jln Mahmud, Jln Hospital and Jln Temenggong. The central bus station is just off Jln Padang Garong, opposite the 25-storey Kota Bharu Trade Centre.

### Sights

The real attraction of the Padang Merdeka area is the nearby cluster of **museums** (748 2266; [www.kelantan.muzium.net](http://www.kelantan.muzium.net)), all contactable by the one phone number. You can hit them all in a day and come away a semi-expert in Malay history and culture.


#### Bank Kerapu

MUSEUM

(WWII Memorial Museum; Map p276; Jln Sultan; adult/child RM2/1; 8.30am-4.45pm Sat-Thu) Built in 1912 for the Mercantile Bank of India, the Bank Kerapu building is a gem of colonial architecture, the first stone structure in Kelantan and, during WWII, HQ of the *kempaitai*, Japan's feared secret police. Today it is also known as the 'War Museum', thanks to its focus on the Japanese invasion and occupation of Malaya and the 1948 Emergency. Exhibits mainly consist of old photography, rusty guns and other militaria.

#### **FREE** Muzium Islam


MUSEUM

(Islamic Museum; Map p276; Jln Sultan; 8.30am-4.45pm Sat-Thu) Muzium Islam occupies an old villa once known as Serambi Mekah (Verandah to Mecca) – a reference to its days as

Kelantan's first school of Islamic instruction. Nowadays it displays a small collection of photographs and artifacts relating to the history of Islam in the state.


#### Istana Jahar

MUSEUM

(Royal Ceremonies Museum; Map p276; Jln Istana; adult/child RM3/1.50; 8.30am-4.45pm Sat-Thu) Kota Bharu's best museum, both in terms of exhibits and structure. It's an achingly beautiful chocolate-brown building that dates back to 1887, easily one of the most attractive traditional buildings in the city. The interior displays focus on Kelatanese ritual and crafts, from detailed descriptions of batik-weaving to the elaborate ceremonies that once marked the life of local youth, from circumcision to wedding nights to funerary rights.


#### Istana Batu

MUSEUM

(Royal Museum; Map p276; Jln Istana; adult/child RM2/1; 8.30am-4.45pm Sat-Thu) The pale-yellow Istana Batu, also known as Muzium Diraja, was constructed in 1939 and was the crown prince's palace until donated to the state. The richly furnished rooms give a surprisingly intimate insight into royal life, with family photos and personal belongings scattered among the fine china and chintzy sofas, and the late sultan's collection of hats.



#### **FREE** Kampung Kraftangan

ARTS CENTRE

(Handicraft Village; Map p276; Jln Hilir Kota; admission free, museum adult/child RM2/1; 8.30am-4.45pm Sat-Thu) This handicraft village, a touristy affair opposite Istana Batu, has a one-room museum with displays of woodcarving, batik-making and other crafts.

#### Muzium Negeri Kelantan


MUSEUM

(State Museum; Map p276; 748 2266; Jln Hospital; adult/child RM2/1; 8.30am-4.45pm Sat-Thu) This museum, next to the tourist information centre, is the official state museum. The exhibits on Kelantan's history and culture are interesting, but the signage is poor.

### Courses

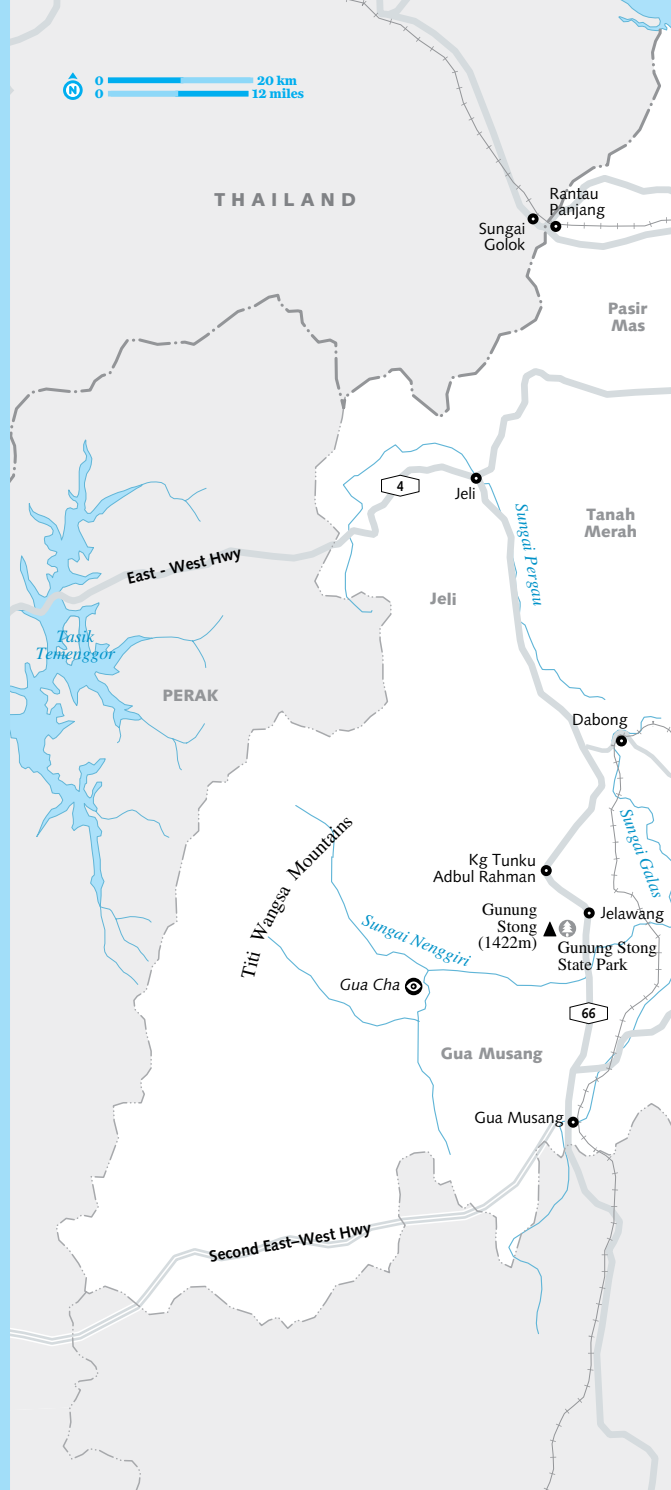
#### Roselan's Malay Cookery Workshop

COOKING

(call for address 017-933 7242) The ever-cheerful and civic-minded Roselan runs this popular Malay cookery workshop. Prices vary depending on the number of participants and ingredients used, but expect to pay around RM90 to RM125 per person for a group of four. Students are invited to a real, middle-class Malay home

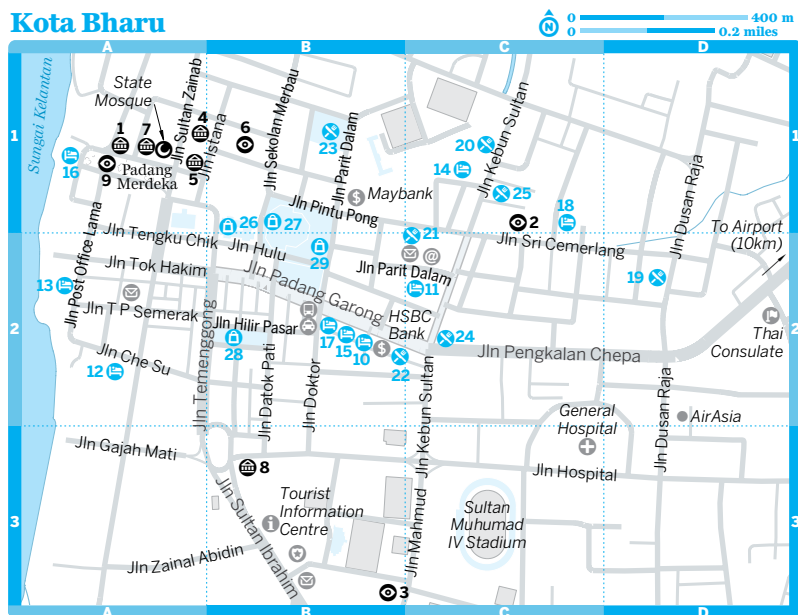
## East Coast Islands, Kelantan & Terengganu Highlights

- 1 Taking in sun, sand and sea on the amazingly varied beaches of the **Perhentian Islands** (Pulau Perhentian, p283)
- 2 Snorkelling and beach-combing in the less visited tropical paradise of **Pulau Kapas** (p293)
- 3 Taking a night-time boat tour through the ghostly mangrove swamps and being surrounded by fireflies blinking in synchronisation at the **Penarik Firefly Sanctuary** (p300)
- 4 Tempting your taste buds in the street stalls and restaurants of **Khota Bharu** (p278)
- 5 Checking out the Thai temples of **Tumpat** (p281)





## Kota Bharu



### Kota Bharu

#### 📍 Sights

- 1 Bank Kerapu ..... A1
- 2 Bird Singing Field..... C1
- 3 Gelanggang Seni..... B3
- 4 Istana Batu ..... A1
- 5 Istana Jahar ..... A1
- 6 Kampung Kraftangan..... B1
- 7 Muzium Islam ..... A1
- 8 Muzium Negeri Kelanta..... B3
- 9 Padang Merdeka..... A1

#### 🎨 Activities, Courses & Tours

- Zecsmen Design ..... (see 6)

#### 🏠 Sleeping

- 10 Azam Hotel..... B2
- 11 Cerana Guest House ..... C2
- 12 Crystal Lodge..... A2
- 13 Grand Riverview Hotel ..... A2
- 14 Ideal Travellers' House..... C1
- 15 KB Backpackers Lodge..... B2

- 16 Ridet Hotel ..... A1
- 17 Suria Hotel ..... B2
- 18 Zeck's Traveller's Inn ..... C1

#### 🍴 Eating

- 19 Four Seasons..... D2
- K's Kitchen..... (see 16)
- 20 Medan Selera Kebun Sultan Food Court ..... C1
- 21 Muhibah Aneka Cake House ..... C2
- 22 Nasi Air Hideng Pok Sen Food Court ..... B2
- 23 Night Market..... B1
- 24 Sri Devi Restaurant..... C2
- 25 West Lake Eating House..... C1

#### 🛒 Shopping

- 26 Bazaar Buluh Kubu ..... B1
- 27 Central Market ..... B1
- 28 Old Central Market..... B2
- 29 Street Market ..... B2

(Roselan's own or other locals') and taught to cook typical Malay dishes. Contact Roselan to schedule classes and get his address. Hostels such as Zeck's and KB Lodge can all hook you up with their own cooking courses, which are offered at similar rates.

### Zecsmen Design

(Map p276; ☎012-929 2822; zecs\_man\_design@yahoo.com; Jln Hilir Kota, Kampung Kraftangan; ☀10am-7pm Sat-Thu) In addition to buying ready-made batik, you can also try your hand at batik painting at Zecsmen Design's tutored

BATIK PAINTING



four- to five-hour classes for between RM50 and RM70 (depending on size and fabric used in your work). A full-day course costs RM100.

## Tours

Most hostels organise tours for their guests. Possible tours include two-day/three-night expeditions into the jungle around Gua Musang (RM250 to RM350), boat trips up small local rivers into sleepy fishing villages where silk kites are made by candlelight (RM60 to RM80), and short city tours (RM25 to RM35). Other tours include two-hour tours of the Tumpat temples (RM75) and half-day craft tours (RM90-115).

Pawi at KB Backpackers Lodge (p277), Zeck at Zeck's Traveller's Inn (p277), and freelance tour guide **Roselan** (☎017-933 7242) are all reputable and knowledgeable.

## Festivals & Events

Kota Bharans love birdsong, to the point where they broadcast the chirping of birds in an abandoned building across loudspeakers set up through the city. Each year around August the city holds a **bird-singing contest**, during which you can see Malay songbirds perform; the ornate cages the birds are housed in are almost as pretty as their songs. Finally, every Friday and Saturday morning there's a bird-singing contest in a **bird singing field** (Map p276) near Zeck's Traveller's Inn, where locals hang decorative bird cages up on long poles, then sit back and listen. Travellers are often invited to watch and even provide a bit of amateur judging.

The spectacular **kite festival** (Pesta Wau) is held in June, and the **cultural carnival** (Karnival Kebudayaan Kelantan), featuring drumming and top-spinning contests, takes place in September. The **Sultan's Birthday** celebration (March/April) involves a week of cultural events. The dates vary, so check with the tourist information centre.

From March until September, a cultural show takes place at the Cultural Centre three days a week featuring dancing, kite-making, top-spinning and displays of both local games, dancing and singing. Shows are usually held in the evenings on Saturday (twice), Monday afternoon, Wednesday (afternoon and night). Performance times change, so ask Miriam at Zeck's guest house.

## Sleeping

Kota Bharu is a popular stop on the backpacker trail, and there's plenty of cheap

hostels around town, including several along Jln Padang Garong. Midrange and luxury options are aimed at business travellers.



### **Zeck's Traveller's Inn**

HOMESTAY \$

(Map p276; ☎743 1613; 7088G Jln Sri Cemerlang; dm/s/d from RM10/15/25, air-con RM45-60; ④⑤⑥) Zeck and Miriam ('call me mama') Zaki's home is located in a peaceful nook north of the city centre, with an attractive little garden to lounge about in and light meals and drinks always at hand. Friendly and social, this family-owned and -run place is a great way to get a feel for genuine Malaysian *kampung* (village) life in the heart of Kota Bharu. The Zaki family are a mine of information and travel hook-ups, and will be glad to help you with your ongoing travel plans throughout Malaysia. Zeck also helps to arrange tours into Taman Negara through the park's far-less travelled Kelantan entrance.

### **KB Backpackers Lodge**

HOTEL, HOSTEL \$

(Map p276; ☎019-9445222, 7488841; www.kb-backpackers.com.my; 1872D Jln Padang Garong; dm/r from RM8/20; ④⑤) KB's rooms are only so-so (the bigger the better is the rule). But owner Pawi is so helpful and a wealth of information, and the vibe at his hostel is so internationally chill in the way that made us love backpacking in the first place, that it more than makes up for it. Pawi is also a mad bicycling enthusiast and organises bike trips (on and off road) and rents out high-quality bicycles to guests. Make sure you've got the right place – a somewhat dingy hostel calling itself 'KB Backpackers Inn' operates across the street.

## **GET CULTURED**

A wide variety of local cultural events, including *gasing uri* (top-spinning), *silat* (a Malay form of martial arts), kite-making, drumming and shadow-puppet shows are held regularly at the **Gelanggang Seni** (Cultural Centre; Map p276; ☎744 3124; Jln Mahmud). The events are especially kid-friendly, and best of all they're totally free. Sessions are held Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from February to September, currently between 3.30pm and 5.30pm, and 9pm and 11pm, but check with the tourist information centre (p279), or your hotel's owners, who should have a full timetable of events.

**Ridel Hotel**

(Map p276; ☎747-7000; www.ridelhotel.com.my; Block A, Pelangi Mall, Jln Pasar Lama; s/d/tr from RM97/107/147; ㊟㊟㊟) Sitting on the riverfront just up from the jetty, this new 85-room hotel is larger than it seems from the outside. Rooms are small but chic, with pastel painted walls and a minimalist design. Snag a room with a riverfront view if you can.

HOTEL \$\$

**Grand Riverview Hotel**

(Map p276; ☎743 9988; www.grh.com.my; 9 Jln Post Office Lama; r/s from RM215/318; ㊟㊟) Perched on the river edge, this huge hotel offers high standards at reasonable prices; long-term 'promotions' will shave around 40% off the published rates. Rooms at the back have some fine views across the water, and all have king-sized beds and big bathrooms with both showers and baths.

HOTEL \$\$

**Cerana Guest House**

(Map p276; ☎956 7141; www.ceranaguesthouse.com; 39521 Jln Padang Garong; dm/d/f RM12/35/35; ㊟㊟㊟) This pleasant and colourful guesthouse is a block away from the main drag and offers clean, unpretentious rooms and a cool, pastel-painted communal chill-out spot. Cheaper rooms have shared bathrooms and fans, while pricier ones offer cool air and privacy. From the bus station hang a left at the Pizza Hut; the main entrance is in a quiet back alley just north of Jln Padang Garong.

GUESTHOUSE \$

**Suria Hotel**

(Map p276; ☎743 2255; suria.kb@tm.net.my; Jln Padang Garong; s/d from RM75, tr RM90; ㊟) Just up the

HOTEL \$

street from the bus station, the Suria is a welcoming hotel with a friendly staff. The cheaper rooms are windowless but there are some more appealing choices boasting natural light. Rooms overlooking the street may be noisy.

**Crystal Lodge**

(Map p276; ☎747 0888; www.crystalodge.com.my; 124 Jln Che Su; s/d from RM150/299; ㊟㊟㊟) This clean and airy place is decent value, with comfortable rooms, free in-house movies and daily newspapers. There's an attractive rooftop restaurant with a great view over the river.

HOTEL \$\$

**Azam Hotel**

(Map p276; ☎747 0508; 1872A Jln Padang Garong; s/d from RM80, f from RM110; ㊟) This cozy if boring hotel is set right in the heart of town above the photography shop of the same name. It has decent rooms; try to get one towards the back of the building to avoid street noise.

HOTEL \$

**Ideal Travellers' House**

(Map p276; ☎744 2246; www.ugoideal.com; 3954F Jln Kebun Sultan; s/d/tr RM12/28/35; ㊟㊟) This serious backpacker pad is located down an alley off Jln Kebun Sultan and has cramped, fan-cooled rooms. There's a pleasant garden for having a laze during the day, with drinks and snacks available.

GUESTHOUSE \$

**Eating****West Lake Eating House**

(Map p276; Jln Kebun Sultan; mains from RM5; ☎10am-8pm; ㊟) Don't let the plain looking

CHINESE \$

**QUICK EATS IN KOTA BHARU**

One of the great things about KB is how well (and cheaply) you can eat without ever setting foot in a restaurant. The most popular spot is KB's **night market** (Map p276; Jln Pintu Pong), where stalls are set up in the evening around 5pm and stay open past midnight. Say 'Suka pedas' ('I like it hot') to eat as the locals do. Specialties include *ayam percik* (marinated chicken on bamboo skewers) and *nasi kerabu* (rice with coconut, fish and spices), blue rice, squid-on-a-stick and *murtabak* (pan-fried flat bread filled with everything from minced meat to bananas).

Food courts are an excellent option day or night. One good one is the **Nasi Air Hideng Pok Sen Food Court** (Map p276; Jln Padang Garong) on Jln Padang Garong (just across from the Pizza Hut), which has several stalls serving Malay specialties, a self-serve buffet, and a couple of stalls serving coffee and iced beverages in an open-air setting with two large flat screen TVs showing Hollywood films around the clock. The **Medan Selera Kebun Sultan Food Court** (Map p276; ☎746 1632; Jln Kebun Sultan; mains from RM3; ☎lunch & dinner) on Jln Kebun Sultan offers a variety of Chinese dishes like claypot chicken rice and *kway teow* (rice-flour noodles). They don't show Hollywood movies, but they do serve beer.

More food stalls can be found next to the river opposite the **Padang Merdeka** (Map p276) and by the Jln Hamzah bus station, and there's a modern **food court** (Jln Hamzah; ☎lunch & dinner) serving Western fast-food (burgers, fried chicken) inside KB Mall.



## KELANTAN'S INFO NERVE CENTRE

Whether you're looking to find out the latest on Kelantan's festival scene, interested in spending some time in a traditional Malaysian Homestay, seeking a tour guide or are just after information in general, the friendly, multilingual staff at Kelantan's excellent **tourist information centre** (☎748 5534; Jln Sultan Ibrahim; ☉8am-1pm & 2-4.30pm Sun-Thu) can help. While some tourist information centres in Malaysia are gussied-up souvenir shops, this place is the real deal and seems to exist solely to help travellers get the most out of their visit. Stop in for the air conditioning; stick around for the unbridled flow of local knowledge on tap.

decor and plastic chairs fool you. West Lake Eating House may well serve some of the tastiest Chinese fair in all of eastern Malaysia, thanks to a particularly talented chef who works ceaselessly in a tiny kitchen. Esoteric dishes like stewed bean curd stuffed with fish cakes and lightly sautéed purple eggplant with garlic sauce share the steam table with more common (but no less delicious) dishes like braised pork ribs, roast duck and stir-fried vegetables. Bravo, West Lake!

### Four Seasons

CHINESE \$\$

(Map p276; www.fourseasonsrestaurant.com.my; 5670 Jln Sri Cemerlang; mains from RM15; ☉lunch & dinner) The Four Seasons is packed nightly with locals enjoying seafood dishes like clay-pot prawn and dry cuttlefish with mango salad. Sold by weight, the house specialty, deep-fried soft-shell crab, should only set you back about RM40 for two people.

### K's Kitchen

RESTAURANT \$

(Map p276; Pelangi Mall, Jln Pasar Lama; mains from RM5.50; ☉breakfast, lunch & dinner) Just below the Ridel Hotel, this cute restaurant serves Western and Malay food on rectangular tables with inset dioramas in which strange bits of flotsam are incorporated to create three-dimensional scenes of random artistry. If this doesn't float your boat, there's also a TV. Come for the decor alone – the food is standard rather than stand-out, and the juices are too sweet.

### Muhibah Aneka Cake House

CAFE \$

(Map p276; Jln Pintu Pong; mains from RM4; ☉8am-10pm) In addition to serving the best iced cappuccino in town (a good thing in a city where Nescafe is the rule), this lovely bakery has great cakes, iced desserts and even donuts!

### Sri Devi Restaurant

MALAY \$

(Map p276; 4213-F Jln Kebun Sultan; mains from RM4; ☉lunch & dinner Sat-Thur) As popular with locals as it is with tourists, this is a great

place for an authentic banana-leaf curry and a mango lassi.

## Shopping

Kota Bharu is a centre for Malay crafts. Batik, *kain songket* (cloth brocaded with gold and silver), silverware, woodcarving and kite-making factories and shops are dotted around town.

One of the best places to see handicrafts is on the road north to Pantai Cahaya Bulan (PCB). There are a number of workshops, representing most crafts, stretched out along the road all the way to the beach. Your best bet in visiting these is to rent a bicycle from Pawi at KB's Backpackers Lodge.

### Central Market

MARKET

(Pasar Besar Siti Khadijah; Map p276; Jln Hulu; ☉6am-6pm) One of the most colourful and active markets in Malaysia, the central market is at its busiest first thing in the morning, and has usually packed up by early afternoon. Downstairs is the produce section, while upstairs stalls selling spices, brassware, batik and other goods stay open longer.

### Bazaar Buluh Kubu

HANDICRAFTS

(Map p276; Jln Hulu; ☉Sat-Thur) Near the central market, Bazaar Buluh Kubu is a good place to buy handicrafts such as batik, traditional Malay clothing and jewellery.

### Old Central Market

MARKET

(Map p276; Jln Hilir Pasar; ☉Sat-Thur) Kota Bharu's old central market consists of a block of food stalls on the ground floor, and a selection of batik, *songket* and clothing upstairs.

### Street Market

MARKET

(Map p276; Jln Parit Dalam; ☉6-10pm) A street market selling clothes, copy watches and DVDs takes over Jln Parit Dalam in the evenings.

## GETTING TO THAILAND: RANTAU PANJANG TO SUNGAI KOLOK

**Getting to the border** The Thailand border is at Rantau Panjang; bus 29 departs on the hour from Kota Bharu's central bus station (RM4, 1½ hours). Share taxis from Kota Bharu to Rantau Panjang cost RM30 per car and take 45 minutes.

There's another border crossing at Pengkalan Kubor, on the coast, but transport links aren't as good and crossing here can be dodgy during periods of sectarian violence in southern Thailand. Inquire at the tourist information centre before using this crossing. During the day a large car ferry (RM1 for pedestrians) crosses the river to busy Tak Bai in Thailand. From Kota Bharu, take bus 27 or 43 (RM2.40) from the central bus station.

**At the border** From Rantau Panjang you can walk across the border to Sungai Kolok, where you can catch the train to Bangkok at the Sungai Kolok station.

### i Information

Banks are open from 10am to 3pm Saturday to Wednesday, 9.30am to 11.30am Thursday, and are closed on Friday.

**HSBC Bank** (Jln Padang Garong)

**Maybank** (Jln Pintu Pong) Near the night market and usually open to 7pm.

**Multimedia Internet** (☎747 7735; 171 Jln Parit Dalam; per hr RM2)

### i Getting There & Away

#### Air

**Malaysia Airlines** (☎771 4703; <http://www.malaysiaairlines.com>; Jln Gajah Mati), **AirAsia** (☎746 1671; [www.airasia.com](http://www.airasia.com); airport) and **Firefly** (☎03-7845 4543; [www.fireflyz.com.my](http://www.fireflyz.com.my); airport) all have direct flights to KL as well as other destinations. The latter two often offer specials that can make plane travel almost as cheap as taking a bus; check their websites for details.

Flights take off from Kota Bharu's Sultan Ismail Petra Airport, 8 km outside of the city centre. Bus 9 (RM2, 20 minutes) leaves hourly from the main bus station to the airport.

**Bus**

Most buses operate from the **central bus station** (☎747 5971, 747 4330; Jln Padang Garong). A few buses also leave from Lembah Sireh Bus Station near the Kota Bharu Tesco. Since these change from time to time it's best to ask your guesthouse or the tourist information centre where your bus leaves from.

#### Bus

Most regional buses leave from the central bus station. Destinations include Wakaf Baharu (buses 19 and 27, RM1.20), Rantau Panjang (bus 29, RM3), Tumpat (bus 19, RM1.50), Bachok (buses 2B, 23 and 29, RM3.30), Pasir Puteh (bus 3, RM5.10), Jerreh (bus 30, RM7.10) and Kuala Krai (bus 5, RM8.30). Note that some of these may be identified by destination rather than number.

Most regional buses leave from the central bus station. Destinations include Wakaf Baharu (buses 19 and 27, RM1.20), Rantau Panjang (bus 29, RM3), Tumpat (bus 19, RM1.50), Bachok (buses 2B, 23 and 29, RM3.30), Pasir Puteh (bus 3, RM5.10), Jerreh (bus 30, RM7.10) and Kuala Krai (bus 5, RM8.30). Note that some of these may be identified by destination rather than number.

### LONG-DISTANCE BUSES

Destination	Price (RM)	Duration (hrs)
Alor Setar	35	8
Butterworth	35	8
Gua Musang	12	3
Ipoh	34	8
Kuala Lumpur	40	8
Kuala Terengganu	15	3
Kuantan	32	5
Lumut	45	9
Melaka	55	9
Singapore	80	11

### Car

Travellers can hire cars from **Hawk** (☎773 3824; Sultan Ismail Petra Airport).

### Taxi

The **taxi stand** is on the southern side of the central bus station. Avoid the unlicensed cab drivers who will pester you here and elsewhere around town, and take an official taxi as these are cheaper and safer.

Catching an early morning train? Arrange for the taxi to Wakaf Baharu the night before at your guesthouse.

### Train

The nearest station is **Wakaf Baharu** (☎719 6986). There is a daily express train all the way to KL (economy seat /class-2 seat/class-2 bed RM30/42/54, 13 hours) leaving daily at 6:45pm stopping at Kuala Lipis, Jerantut and Gemas. Two daily local trains stop at almost every station to Kuala Lipis (RM19.20, 13 hours). There are also five local trains a day that go as far as Gua Musang (RM7.20, five to six hours).

KTM has a ticket office (counter 5) at Kota Bharu's Jln Hamzah bus station.

## **i** Getting Around

The airport is 9km from town. You can take bus 8 or 9 from the old central market; a taxi costs RM20.

Trishaws can still be seen on the city streets, though they are not as common as they once were. Prices are negotiable but reckon on around RM5 and upwards for a short journey of up to 1km.

## Around Kota Bharu

### PANTAI CAHAYA BULAN (PCB)

Kota Bharu's main beach was once known as Pantai Cinta Berahi, or the Beach of Passionate Love. In keeping with Islamic sensibilities, it's now known as Pantai Cahaya Bulan, or Moonlight Beach, but most people call it PCB. The beach is nice, but is ruined somewhat by 25 nearly identical stall-type restaurants serving exactly the same deep-fried seafood stacked in greasy rows.

There are two places worth staying at PCB: the **Perdana Resort** (☎7774 4000; [perdanaresort.com.my](http://perdanaresort.com.my); chalets from RM120-205 incl breakfast; 🏠🍽️🚶) is just off the main road (hang a right at the sign reading 'charmingly different') and offers lovely beach-front chalets with beautiful floor-to-ceiling windows in a bucolic garden setting, and an open-air restaurant. The sprawling 95-unit **PCB Resort** (☎774 4040, 796 4040; [www.pcbresort.com.my](http://www.pcbresort.com.my); chalets from RM59-340; 🏠🍽️🚶) has chalets plus cheaper flats for travellers on a budget.

The road leading to PCB is quite pretty, especially by bicycle, and there are a number of small batik shops and workshops along the way.

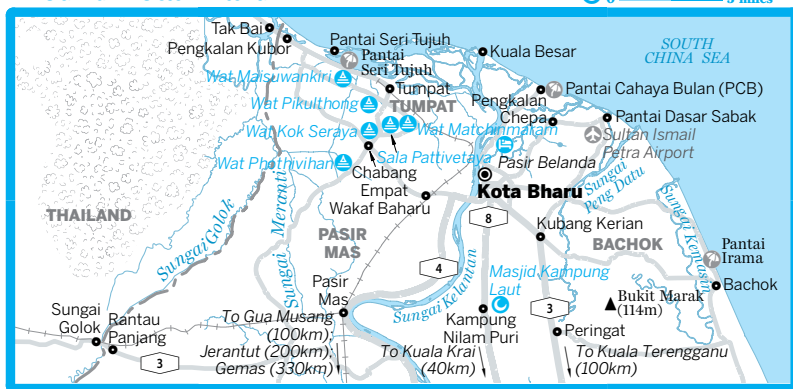
### TUMPAT'S TEMPLES

North of Kota Bharu, the Tumpat district is Malaysia's culturally porous hinterland, neither wholly Malay nor Thai, with a dash of Chinese culture thrown in for good measure. Numerous Buddhist temples are found all over the region, and **Wesak Day** (a celebration of Buddha's life, usually held in April or May) is a particularly good time to visit. The area is serviced by some local buses (details below); alternatively, you could hire a local tour guide.

Supposedly one of the largest Buddhist temples in Southeast Asia, **Wat Phothivihan** boasts a 40m-long reclining Buddha statue, erected in 1973. There are some smaller shrines within the grounds, as well as a canteen and a rest house for use by sincere devotees, for a donation. To get here, take bus 19 or 27 from Kota Bharu to Chabang Empat. Get off at the crossroads and turn left (southwest). Walk 3.5km along this road, through postcard villages and paddies, until you reach Kampung Jambu and the reclining Buddha (about one hour).

At Chabang Empat, if you take the turn to the right (north) at the light in front of the police station, you will come to **Wat Kok Seraya** after about 1km, which houses a modest standing female Buddha. While the temple's architecture is Thai, the female Buddha is more Chinese, which is probably attributable to most Buddhists here

## Around Kota Bharu



being of Chinese origin. Continuing north about 4km towards Tumpat, you will come to **Wat Pikulthong**, housing an impressive gold mosaic standing Buddha. You can get to both on bus 19; continue past Chabang Empat and ask the driver to let you off.

Around 4km north of Chabang Empat near the village of Kampung Bukit Tanah is **Wat Maisuwankiri**. A richly decorated dragon boat surrounded by a channel of murky water constitutes the 'floating temple', but of more interest may be the preserved body of a former abbot kept on somewhat morbid

public display. The bus from Kota Bharu to Pengkalan Kubor stops outside the temple.

Also worth a look is **Wat Matchinram** with its magnificent 50m-high seated Buddha (more Chinese than Thai, but also decorated with an Indian-origin dharma wheel), allegedly the largest of its type in Asia. Just across the road from here is **Sala Pattivetaya**, a Thai temple and village complex dotted with colourful statues. They are located about 2km south of Tumpat.

## KELANTAN'S WILD INTERIOR

To really understand Kelantan, you need to penetrate its wild and woolly southern jungle interior, accessible via the so-called Jungle Railway ('so-called' as much of the once-verdant jungle has been hacked down to make way for palm-oil plantations). Still, some jungle does remain, and bits and pieces of Peninsular Malaysia's mountainous backbone still evoke a feeling of tropical frontier adventure.

Lined with flowers, trees and a mixture of old and new style *kampung* (village) houses, the pretty jungle town of **Dabong** is an excellent exploration base. The town is about three hours by train from Tumpat and has a few restaurants, shops and guesthouses. Dabong village elder Abedin owns **Rumah Rehat Dabong** (☎019-960 6789; r from RM25; ☼☼), a 1980s longhouse with decent rooms and private showers. Abedin also rents rooms in a larger house just a few blocks away that has a more modern vibe to it.

Nearby village Jelawang is where you'll find **Homestay Kampung Jelawang** (☎010 9936 1152; RM50, includes meals), the immaculately clean four-bedroom home of the Kak-Dah family. Guests of the family are invited to eat meals and participate in a variety of activities, from caving and hiking to real-life stuff tapping rubber and making banana crackers. The price includes meals and a room with the family and their long haired cat Bingtang ('star').

There are several caves in the limestone outcrops a few kilometres southeast of Dabong: **Gua Ikan** (Fish Cave) is the most accessible, but the most impressive is **Stepping Stone Cave**, a narrow 30m corridor through a limestone wall that leads to a hidden grotto and on to **Kris Cave**. These latter two should not be attempted by claustrophobics.

About 15km from Dabong is **Gunung Stong State Park**. Named for the 1422m-high Gunung Stong mountain, the park offers amazing hiking, swimming and trekking opportunities. Next to the mountain, the park's star attractions are its waterfalls, located a 20-minute climb past the park's main resort; a further 45 minutes of climbing brings you to the top of the falls and a camp site, from which you can make longer excursions to the mountain's summit and the upper falls. Most tour companies divide the trek into three checkpoints. A combination of jungle mist and mountain fog can make for hazy conditions, but on good days you get the sense you're climbing over clouds humming with the screams of animals in the jungle below.

Should you decide to stay in the park, **Gunung Stong State Park Resort** (☎019-919 9898; d RM20, chalets from RM100, camping RM20; ☼) has some fine chalets. The best of these is the VIP Chalet (RM120), which offers a beautiful balcony hanging over the river, a comfortable queen-sized bed and a TV. Non-VIP chalets are equally nice, though lacking the TV and riverfront real estate. There's also camping available.

You can explore the area via a tour organised in Kota Bharu or just head down yourself by train and hire a taxi from Dabong station. With excellent English skills and boundless enthusiasm for the area, local guide **Bukhari 'Bob' Mat** (bobtg6084@gmail.com) leads caving, hiking and rafting tours all around the area.

## PASIR BELANDA

The privately run **Pasir Belanda Homestay** (☎747 7046; [www.kampungstay.com](http://www.kampungstay.com); Jln PCB; s/d/tr RM149/179/199; 🚽🚿) may well be one of the nicest accommodation options in Kelantan. Three sizes of traditional Malay homes have been decked out in smooth sheeting and with little luxuries such as coffee makers. You're close to the beach and can lose yourself there, or just watch the stars from under your *kampung* (village)-style awning.

To get here, take bus 10 (RM1.30) from behind Kampung Kraftangan (Handicraft Village) in Kota Bharu. A taxi costs RM30, and Pasir Belanda will arrange a pick-up from Kota Bharu with advanced notice.

## EAST COAST ISLANDS

### Pulau Perhentian

The Perhentians are a tropical paradise, boasting waters simultaneously electric teal and crystal clear; jungles thick and fecund, and beaches with sand so white from a distance it might pass for snow. At night bonfires and kerosene lamps on the beach and phosphorescence in the water make pin holes in the velvety black, the stars soar above you and the real world becomes something like a bad dream. Most people come to snorkel, dive or do nothing at all.

There are two main islands, Kecil ('Small'), popular with the younger backpacker crowd, and Besar ('Large'), with higher standards of accommodation and a quieter, more relaxed ambience. The quick hop between the two costs around RM20.

While you can usually find a beach party, the Perhentians are a long way from having a Thai-style party atmosphere. Alcohol is available at many restaurants.

Even paradise has its problems, though. The Perhentians are finding it increasingly difficult to deal with the by-product of increasing tourist traffic, and the sight (and smell) of burning piles of rubbish, especially plastic bottles, is unfortunately common.

The islands basically shut down during the monsoon (usually from mid-November to mid-February), although some hotels – especially in Coral Bay – remain open for hardier travellers. There are no banks or ATMs on the islands, so bring cash. Prices quoted here are for high season.



### Activities

#### Diving & Snorkelling

There are coral reefs off both islands and around nearby uninhabited islands, Pulau

Susu Dara in particular. The best bets for snorkelling off the coast are the northern end of Long Beach on Kecil, and the point in front of Coral View Island Resort on Besar. You can swim out to a living coral reef right in front of Tuna Bay Island Resort on Besar. Most chalets organise snorkelling trips for around RM40 per person (more or less depending on the size of the group) and also rent out equipment.

For scuba divers there are several operations on both islands; prices are pretty uniform. At the time of research, open-water certification went from RM850 to RM1100, while dives cost around RM80 to RM125, with discounts for multiple dives. Many of the operators below also run dive excursions out to Pulau Redang. Reputable dive schools include the following:

#### Quiver Dive Team

DIVING

(Map p284; ☎012-213 8885; [www.quiver-perhentian.com](http://www.quiver-perhentian.com)) On Long Beach (Kecil), next to Bubu Resort; also operates from a **lot** (Map p284) next to Shari-la in Coral Bay.

#### Spice Divers

DIVING

(Map p284; ☎096-911 555; [www.spicedivers.net](http://www.spicedivers.net)) On Kecil; offers two dives for RM140 and a full open-water course for RM950. Advanced courses, rescue courses and nitrox available.

#### Turtle Bay Divers

DIVING

(Map p284; ☎019-913 6647, 019-333 6647; [www.turtlebaydivers.com](http://www.turtlebaydivers.com)) With a main office in Long Beach on Kecil, Turtle Bay offers half-day discovery dives (RM200) and three- to four-day PADI courses (RM950). With a veritable UN of dive-masters, Turtle Bay has all linguistic bases covered. Also has an **office** (Map p284) at Mama's Chalet on Besar.

#### Watercolours

DIVING

(Map p284; ☎691 1850; [www.watercoloursworld.com](http://www.watercoloursworld.com)) By Paradise Island Resort on Besar.

## Pulau Perhentian



Divers with kids will be interested in their 'bubble making' course, a mini-dive course specifically for eight and nine year olds.

### Panorama Divers

DIVING

(Map p284; ☎019-648-5600; panoramadiver@gmail.com) This superfriendly Long Beach dive shop offers some of the best dive packages, including full PADI courses for RM1150 (includes accommodation) and three dives a day (and night dives upon request). Single dives are between RM70 and RM80. Check out their five-dive package for RM335.

### Seahorse

DIVING

(Map p284; ☎019-982 6667; facebook/seahorse) On Besar, just north of D'Yumi House. As well as PADI courses, Seahorse offers discover scuba courses from RM150.

### Pro Diver's World

DIVING

(Map p284; ☎691 1705; www.prodiversworld.com) Connected to Coral View Resort on Besar;

offers regular 'free room for dive students' specials in conjunction with the resort, and free diving on birthdays. Tons of packages on its website.

### Leisure World Divers

DIVING

(Map p284; ☎019-987 5977; leisureworlddivers@gmail.com) Connected to Arwana Resort on Besar; offers underwater camera rental (RM50) and dive packages.

### Angel Divers

DIVING

(Map p284; ☎019-923 8840; angeldiversperhantian@live.com) Run from a two-storey, red wooden hut at Coral Bay on Kecil; offers fun dives from RM60 and PADI courses for around RM900.

### Alu Alu Divers

DIVING

(Map p284; ☎691 1650; www.alualudivers.com) At Bayu Dive Lodge on Besar.



## Pulau Perhentian

### Activities, Courses & Tours

- Alu Alu Divers..... (see 7)
- 1 Angel Divers..... A2
- Flora Bay Divers..... (see 18)
- Leisure World Divers..... (see 6)
- Panorama Divers..... (see 26)
- Pro Diver's World..... (see 11)
- 2 Quiver Dive Team..... A2
- Quiver Dive Team..... (see 29)
- 3 Seahorse..... B4
- 4 Spice Divers..... A2
- Turtle Bay Divers..... (see 13)
- Turtle Bay Divers..... (see 20)
- Watercolours..... (see 34)

### Sleeping

- 5 Abdul's Chalets..... B4
- 6 Arwana Perhentian Resort..... C4
- Aur Bay Chalet..... (see 1)
- 7 Bayu Dive Lodge..... C4
- 8 B'First Chalet..... C3
- 9 Bubu Resort..... A2
- 10 Butterfly Chalet..... A3
- 11 Coral View Island Resort..... B3
- 12 D'Ayumni House..... B4
- 13 D'Lagoon Chalets..... A1

- 14 D'Rock Garden Resort..... A2
- 15 Ewan's Place..... A2
- 16 Fauna Beach Chalet..... C4
- 17 Flora 2..... C4
- 18 Flora Bay Resort..... C4
- 19 Lemon Grass..... A2
- 20 Mama's Place..... B3
- 21 Mandalica Beach Resort..... C4
- 22 Matahari Chalets..... A2
- Maya Guest House..... (see 1)
- 23 Mohsin Chalet Bungalows..... A2
- 24 Moonlight Beach Resort..... A2
- 25 New Cocohut..... B3
- 26 Panorama Diver & Chalet..... A2
- 27 Perhentian Island Resort..... C3
- 28 Samudra Beach Chalet..... C3
- 29 Senja Bay Resort..... A3
- 30 Shari-la Island Resort..... A2
- 31 Teluk Ke Ke Camp Site..... C4
- 32 Tropicana Backpacker Inn..... A2
- 33 Tuna Bay Island Resort..... B4
- 34 Watercolours Paradise Resort..... B3
- 35 World Cafe & Chalets..... A2

### Eating

- 36 Reef Chalets..... B3

### Flora Bay Divers

(Map p284; ☎691 1661; www.florabaydivers.com)  
At Teluk Dalam on Besar.

### Hiking

There's plenty of hiking on both islands. On Kecil, the jungle track between Long Beach and Coral Bay is an easy, signposted 15-minute walk. A longer track runs mostly along the shore between Coral Bay and Pasir Petani, and an even longer and more rugged path goes between Long Beach and Teluk Kerma.

Besar has excellent hiking, including a long and hilly track cutting from north to south from close to Perhentian Island Resort to Teluk Dalam at Fauna Beach Chalet. The hike from Love Beach to Teluk Dalam is also pretty rugged, though somewhat shorter.

More rugged tracks can get washed out in heavy rains, so use common sense. Hot and humid is the norm, so bring plenty of water, and don't hike at night without a flashlight.

## Sleeping & Eating BESAR

### MAIN BEACH

Perhentian Besar's main beach stretches along the west coast of the island to the southern tip, interrupted by several rocky headlands – at low tide you can walk around them on the sand, otherwise you'll have to use a water taxi. A smaller beach taken up by Perhentian Island Resort is accessible via a footbridge on the northern end of the beach.

### Reef Chalets

CHALET \$\$

(Map p284; ☎691 1762, 019-981 6762; chalets RM100-290; 📞📞) An absolute find, this family-owned chalet resort offers 12 beautiful chalets set along the beach and surrounding a beautifully maintained jungle garden featuring feather-soft grass and trees filled with lemurs, monkeys, birds and bats. The owners Rashida, Kamil and Kadir are extremely friendly and laid-back, and rent out canoes and snorkelling equipment, and will be happy to help you plan your stay. At the time of writing, Reef's was building

## FINDING THE RIGHT BEACH

With a plethora of amazing beaches, your biggest dilemma on the Perhentians may well be choosing the right one. Knowing the lay of the land will help you decide. A narrow strait separates Perhentian Besar from Perhentian Kecil, so hopping between the two is just a matter of flagging down a boat.

### Main Beach (Besar)

A good selection of accommodations and a long stretch of white sand that's almost as lovely (and less prone to currents) as Long Beach on Kecil. There's no shortage of good spots to explore by walking either north or south. There's more of a family vibe happening on the big island than elsewhere.

### Teluk Dalam (Besar)

The big island's 'southern bite', this circular bay has white-sand beaches and excellent accommodation in all budget ranges. There are a few good restaurants, and good snorkelling spots on the bay's western edge.

### Long Beach (Kecil)

Long Beach offers the best variety of budget accommodation and restaurants, from cookie-cutter BBQ beachfront joints to the excellent Bubu Restaurant. It also has the prettiest beach and the party-est vibe. This brings crowds, and Long Beach can sometimes feel a bit overtouristed. And the beautiful beach has some serious rip tides; there were two drowning deaths in early 2012 alone.

### Coral Bay (Kecil)

A good variety of accommodation in all budget ranges makes Coral Bay the spot for those wanting to stay within walking distance of Long Beach's party vibe without being in it. Most of the resorts on the sheltered beach are open year-round. Coral Bay is more rocky than sandy, and an ongoing construction boom threatens to diminish the quaintness of this once-quiet spot.

### Teluk Kerma (Kecil)

Home to a single accommodation option (D'Lagoon Chalets), this small bay has it going on when it comes to peace and quiet. There's great snorkelling, and a few equally isolated beaches within walking distance. But it's an hour's hike to your nearest neighbour (Long Beach), and if you stay out after dark your options for getting home will be limited and pricey (water taxis charge double after sundown).

an additional set of accommodation in the treetops. All chalets have sea views; some are fan-cooled, while more expensive ones have air-conditioning.

### Abdul's Chalets

CHALET \$\$

(Map p284; ☎019-912 7303; [www.abdulchalet.com](http://www.abdulchalet.com); s/d from RM80/260; 🍽️🚿) Humble Abdul's has undergone a fairly substantial renovation since our last visit; Abdul's still has fan-cooled huts for RM80, but now there's a bevy of higher grade accommodation, from Garden View chalets with air-con for RM150 up to a full air-con, sea-view family room for RM240 and sea-view suites (with TV to compete with the sea view) for RM260. Many of the newer chalets have brand-new fur-

nishing, and smart-looking wood paneled walls. The newly redone dining area, serving freshly caught fish and a variety of Malay and Western dishes, is also pretty snazzy.

### Tuna Bay Island Resort

RESORT \$\$

(Map p284; ☎690 2902; [www.tunabay.com.my](http://www.tunabay.com.my); d/tr/f from RM220/270/370; 🍽️🚿🛏️) This gathering of pristine chalets perches on a lovely stretch of white sand, with others set in the pretty gardens or facing the jungle behind. You can wade out to a living coral reef just offshore, and afterwards relax in the islands' best restaurant and only authentic cocktail bar with a Long Island ice tea or a cappuccino. Stick around for dinner, when Tuna Bay serves multicourse BBQ feasts

featuring prawn, squid, barracuda, snapper and more. Chicken and beef are also available. The resort is very popular with families.

### D'Ayumni House

HUTS \$

(Map p284; ☎019-436 4463, 691 1680; [www.d-ayumnihouse.blogspot.com](http://www.d-ayumnihouse.blogspot.com); dm RM55, r RM80-200; 🍷🍷🍷) A pretty wooden house rises over a series of low-slung, teak-chic chalets and bungalows. Popular with divers and those seeking a bit of budget backpacker vibe in Besar. Owner Ms Lee is a font of information, and can arrange ongoing travel all over Southeast Asia. She also has a little shop and cafe with a moonlight deck.

### Mama's Place

CHALET \$\$

(Map p284; ☎013-984 0232, 019-985 3359; [www.mamaschalet.com.my](http://www.mamaschalet.com.my); chalets fan RM65-85, air-con seaview RM160, family air-con seaview RM350) This sprawling property has 43 chalets on the beach. All are comfortable and clean, and the more expensive ones have sea views and air-conditioners. Mama's also has an alcohol-free restaurant serving local dishes.

### Watercolours Paradise Resort

CHALET \$

(Map p284; ☎691 1850; [www.watercoloursworld.com](http://www.watercoloursworld.com); r RM70-130; 🍷) This friendly resort has

clean chalets operated under the same management as the attached Watercolours dive centre, and is about the best value on Besar. The 'Impiani' expansion is a little more upscale, but more in terms of price (RM150 to RM240) than actual quality of lodging.

### Coral View Island Resort

RESORT \$\$

(Map p284; ☎697 4943; [www.coralviewislandresort.com](http://www.coralviewislandresort.com); r/ste from RM140/550; 🍷🍷) Now boasting 101 chalets, the ever-expanding Coral View has a great location at the northern end of the beach. The accommodation is all lovely, from the simple fan-cooled two-bed chalets to the rather smart air-conditioned beachfront suites. At the time of research management was putting in another more backpacker-friendly guesthouse, with single and double rooms at budget rates. Coral View has good restaurants serving Asian and Western dishes (lunch RM30), and shops.

### New Cocohut

CHALET \$\$

(Map p284; ☎691 1811; [www.perhentianislandcoconut.com](http://www.perhentianislandcoconut.com); r RM160-330; 🍷🍷) Cocohut has a good choice of rooms including pleasant beachside chalets and a two-storey longhouse, which has some great views from the

## LOCAL VOICE: BIRGIT WEBER

*An instructor and assistant manager of the Turtle Bay Dive Shop, Birgit Weber has over a quarter of a century diving experience. Birgit chatted with us about different dive spots around the country.*

### What can I expect to see while diving around Perhentian?

Anything from turtles to black-tipped reef sharks, plus many varieties of stingrays and parrot fish. If it lives on the reef, you'll see it here.

### What's the best spot for diving around the Perhentian Islands?

Sugar Wreck is a huge shipwreck, and every year there seem to be more and more fish around it. It's only 18m deep, so any diver who's taken the open-water course can go down there. It's also only 20 minutes from Long Beach. The Pinnacle is also great. You can see a huge variety of marine life in one place.

### What's the best spot in Malaysia for the advanced diver?

Sipadan Island (p359), off the coast of Sabah in East Malaysia. It's an oceanic island as opposed to being on the continental shelf, so it drops down quite deep. You'll see dozens of turtles and sharks. The sheer number of marine animals you'll see is overwhelming. You need a permit to dive there, so book in advance.

### How about for the beginner?

Definitely Perhentian. The dive sites are shallow and generally have lighter currents. They're also nearby, meaning less time on the boat. One of them you can even swim to!

### What's your take on Tioman (p243) diving?

Tioman sites are a lot like those in Perhentian, but the dive sites are further from the shore, meaning more time in the boat. Plus, Tioman is closer to Singapore and KL, so the island tends to be more commercial and crowded. I prefer Perhentian myself.

## VOLUNTOURISM IN THE PERHENTIAN ISLANDS

Interested in doing more than just sitting on the beach? Want to give back to the precious and varied marine life of the Perhentians? **Ecoteer** ([www.ecoteerresponsibletravel.com](http://www.ecoteerresponsibletravel.com)) operates day-long to multiweek programs that incorporate snorkelling with data-gathering, beach-combing with beach-cleaning and homestays with local families. Expect to pay around RM664 for a week-long experience, which includes boat transfer, three meals a day, accommodation and all equipment. Prices drop during the low season. Check the website for details and testimonials.

upstairs balcony. The cheapest rooms are in the rear and closest to the generator. Coco-hut also manages another property called Cozy Chalet.

### Perhentian Island Resort

RESORT \$\$\$

(Map p284; ☎6911111; [www.perhentianislandresort.net](http://www.perhentianislandresort.net); 3-day/2-night packages RM378-1040; 🍽️🚿🛏️) Offering a bewildering variety of set three-day/two-night packages, this luxurious option overlooks perhaps the best beach on the islands – a beautiful half-moon bay with good coral around the points on either side. There's a huddle of comfortable bungalows and a first-class restaurant serving Western and Malay dishes.

### Teluk Ke Ke Camp Site

CAMPGROUND \$

(Map p284; camp site per person RM10) Camping is available at Teluk Ke Ke Camp Site, a 10-minute walk south of the government rest house. It's a beautiful slice of beach on the southern tip of the peninsula. Snorkelling equipment rental is available, and there's also a tiny restaurant on the beach.

### TELUK DALAM

An easily missed track leads from behind the second jetty near Love Beach over the hill northeast to Teluk Dalam, a secluded bay with a shallow beach, but it's easier to hire a boat than to walk.

### Mandalica Beach Resort

CAMPING \$

(Map p284; ☎019-983 7690; camping per camp site RM50) The extrafriendly Halim family lives on a lovely stretch of white sand on Teluk Dalam's western end and offers covered camp sites with showers and toilets. There's a small cafe serving juices, amazing roti and barbeque, and the family rents all manner of aquatic toys from snorkels to kayaks to banana boats. The family arranges pick up from all over the Perhentians, fishing trips and just about anything else. Ida's banana chocolate roti is worth the walk across the island!

### Flora Bay Resort

CHALET \$\$

(Map p284; ☎691 1666; [www.florabayresort.com](http://www.florabayresort.com); r RM60-210; 🍽️🚿🛏️) The aptly named Flora Bay (flowers abound!) has a variety of options at the back of the beach, ranging from hill-view fan huts for RM60 to 'deluxe' air-con beach chalets for RM210. **Flora 2** (Map p284), an extension of Flora Bay, is a little further along the beach, with a smaller range of pretty much identical chalets, but only Flora 1 has wireless. A restaurant was in the works at the time of our visit.

### Bayu Dive Lodge

CHALET \$\$

(Map p284; ☎691 1650; [www.alualudivers.com](http://www.alualudivers.com); r RM68-213; 🍽️) A collection of smartly furnished, deep-brown chalets are situated around a beautifully manicured central garden courtyard. All rooms are lovely, with the more expensive ones having air-con and hot showers. Only open during the high season. Alu Alu Divers operates from here.

### Arwana Perhentian Resort

RESORT \$\$

(Map p284; ☎778 0888; [www.arwanaperhentian.com.my](http://www.arwanaperhentian.com.my); dm/d/ste from RM30/120/580; 🍽️🚿🛏️) This huge, upmarket resort occupies the eastern flank of Teluk Dalam, although it has no beach frontage itself. The broad array of rooms includes, surprisingly, two dorm blocks at the very back. The cheaper 'standard' rooms are a bit poky, but more expensive ones are decently furnished (some with balconies). Facilities include a snooker room, karaoke booths and a dive centre.

### B'First Chalet

CHALET \$

(Map p284; ☎013-295 5138, 013-924 5946; r RM60-120) The Azman family runs this small resort and restaurant on the eastern edge of the beach. Fan-cooled chalets are comfortable and have two beds; air-con chalets have a double and a single bed. The restaurant serves genuine Malaysian food and barbeque every night.

**Samudra Beach Chalet**

CHALET \$

(Map p284; ☎691 1677; [www.samudrabeachchalet.com](http://www.samudrabeachchalet.com); r RM50-140) Samudra has traditional Malaysian A-frame chalets. Slightly dark on the inside, cheaper ones have fans; the air-conditioned family room with two double beds is a decent deal.

**Fauna Beach Chalet**

CHALET \$\$

(Map p284; ☎691 7607; r RM50-140; ☼) Sitting on an attractive stretch of sand, Fauna has a choice of the usual creaky wooden huts and more comfortable sea-view bungalows.

**PULAU PERHENTIAN KECIL****LONG BEACH****Bubu Resort**

RESORT \$\$\$

(Map p284; ☎03-2142 6688; [www.buburesort.com.my](http://www.buburesort.com.my); Long Beach; r from RM415; ☼☎) At the northern end of the bay, this top-end option offers 38 rooms in a modern, three-storey setting overlooking Long Beach itself and a gorgeous restaurant in *palapa* style (open-sided, with a thatched roof made of dried palm leaves). All rooms face the beach and offer similar mod cons, including air-con, hot showers and full wireless internet access. Most rooms have balconies, and all feature morning sun. The restaurant is the highest-end eatery on Kecil, serving – in our opinion – the best seafood BBQ in eastern Malaysia. Even if you can't afford to stay here, you owe it to yourself to stop by Bubu's bar for a fruity beach drink.

**D'Rock Garden Resort**

CHALET \$\$

(Map p284; ☎012-325 2162; Long Beach; d with/without bathroom from RM120/45, deluxe r RM325) Steep steps running up the southern end of Long Beach will get you to this vertiginous place on the rocks. Cheaper rooms are fan cooled, and only the deluxe have hot showers. The position of the huts (even the cheaper ones) overlooking the long sweep of Long Beach is fabulous. D'Rock also has a little restaurant offering the usual cuisine and the same lovely view.

**World Cafe & Chalets**

CHALET \$\$\$

(Map p284; ☎016-260 3546; [www.buburesort.com.my](http://www.buburesort.com.my); chalet d from RM450; ☼☎) Managed by the same people who run Bubu Resort, this is another high-end option on otherwise backpacker-y Long Beach. The six air-conditioned chalets have private terraces, hot-water showers and huge, comfortable beds. Even if you're not staying here, it's worth a

visit to the World Cafe, a *palapa* restaurant sitting on the beach and serving coffee, cocktails and an eclectic mix of European foods. Room prices include breakfast for two and two evening cocktails per person at either the World Cafe or Bubu. Low-season discounts available.

**Panorama Diver & Chalet**

CHALET \$

(Map p284; ☎691 1590; [www.panomaperhentian.com](http://www.panomaperhentian.com); r RM30-150; ☼☎) A favourite with divers and snorkellers, this ultrarelaxed chalet, restaurant and dive shop (p285) is set back a bit from Long Beach. Rooms range from fan-cooled doubles to air-conditioned chalets. Nicest is the family room, which has two queen-sized beds, near-wraparound windows, a balcony, and whimsical furniture. What makes Panorama so special are the dive packages, with divers getting sweet deals (up to 40% off) on all rooms. Panorama's restaurant is especially good, serving Asian and Western cuisine, not to mention some of the best pizza in eastern Malaysia.

**Mohsin Chalet Bungalows**

BUNGALOW \$\$

(Map p284; ☎012-932 1929; [facebook/mohsinchalet](https://facebook.com/mohsinchalet); dm RM25 d with/without air-con RM100/130) Mohsin's chalets are set on a steep hill on the southern end of the beach (though the path leading here is just behind the World Cafe). The accommodation is fairly standard, but the ambience of the restaurant, the views, and the surreal friendliness of the staff – who'll greet you welcome drink in hand – make this place well worth spending a few days.

**Matahari Chalets**

CHALET \$

(Map p284; ☎019-914 2883; [www.mataharichalet.com](http://www.mataharichalet.com); r RM25-120) Set back among the trees with a walkway to the beach, Matahari is one of the better chalet operations. It has a good range of accommodation, from simple huts with shared bathroom to spacious bungalows. There is also a restaurant, a shop and a moneychanger.

**Moonlight Beach Resort**

BUNGALOW \$

(Map p284; ☎013-9827 457; dm RM20; r with shared bathroom RM40; fan r RM60-70, air-con r RM100; ☼) Located on the northern end of the beach right by the jetty, Moonlight has longhouse rooms, dorm rooms and small chalets. Moonlight's staff are friendly, its A-frame huts are fairly spruce and its regular rooms are comfortable enough.

**Lemon Grass**

BUNGALOW \$

(Map p284; ☎019-981 8393; chalets from RM40) At the southern tip of Long Beach, Lemon Grass has friendly management and 16 no-frills fan huts with shared bathrooms. There are great views from the verandah at reception and nice secluded spots to sit and gaze out to sea. All huts are the same price; try to get one with a sea view.

**TELUK KERMA****D'Lagoon Chalets**

HUT \$

(Map p284; ☎019-985 7089; Teluk Kerma; camp site RM10, dm RM20, chalet RM60; tr RM150) Teluk Kerma is a pretty, isolated bay with fine coral and a location that can't be beat for tranquility. The folks at D'Lagoon have taken full advantage of their position as the bay's sole spot to create something right out of Peter Pan. Accommodation ranges from a longhouse with dorm beds to simple chalets on stilts to a honeymoon treehouse. Among the activities on offer are snorkelling, shark- and turtle-watching trips, jungle hikes to remote beaches, and the island's only zip line. Management will also arrange local music at night on request. Make sure you tell the boat captain to drop you here – otherwise it's an hour's hike from the Long Beach jetty. There's an on-site restaurant serving decent western and Malay food for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

**CORAL BAY**

A 15 minute walk west from the Long Beach Jetty takes you to Coral Bay.

**Shari-la Island Resort**

RESORT \$\$

(Map p284; ☎691 1500; www.shari-la.com; budget r RM60; r/ste from RM180/320; ㊥㊦㊧) Situated on the northern end of Coral Bay, and sprawling back into the jungle trail, this place offers a surprisingly posh package for the money. A-frame chalets are well furnished with wooden decks and comfy beds, the suites have satellite-equipped TVs and full bathrooms, and the budget rooms are some of the best on the island, with three beds each and air-conditioning (bathrooms are shared). Most chalets are equipped with solar hot-water showers, and Shari-la has its own secluded beach. One of the few places in Coral Bay that has 24-hour electricity. The onsite restaurant (Malay, Western and Thai dishes) is also quite good.

**Butterfly Chalet**

BUNGALOW \$

(Map p284; r RM50) A series of basic wooden huts perched precariously on the headland, this place is reached by a steep clamber over the rocks next to Senja Bay Resort. It's all a bit tattered, but the setting, among blooming gardens and with superb views across the bay, is beautiful. There's no phone, electricity goes off during the day, and the sign reading 'don't be shy, check in by yourself' makes this one of the quirkiest spots on the island.

**Tropicana Backpacker Inn**

BUNGALOW \$

(Map p284; ☎6911 380; Coral Bay; dm/r RM15/40-80; ㊦) Forty bungalows are spread out over a hillside here, equidistant between Coral Bay and Long Beach. The single rooms have double beds with mosquito netting and cold showers; higher priced rooms are fairly plain for the price. Dorms have eight beds, two bathrooms and screened-in windows that might keep the mosquitoes out. Management also makes cash advances on Visa and Mastercard, for those who have run out of cash mid visit.

**Senja Bay Resort**

RESORT \$\$

(Map p284; ☎691 1799; www.senjabay.com; Coral Bay; fan/air-con/seaview & air-con r from RM100/150/200; ㊥㊦㊧) The facilities at this cluster of bungalows and huts are a little more polished than many of the alternatives, and the family setting – a beachfront restaurant playing smooth jazz all day – may suit travellers wanting a little quiet.

**Ewan's Place**

HUT, CAFE \$

(Map p284; ☎014-817 8303; Coral Bay; d RM50; ㊦) Cookie-cutter pre-fab huts on the path leading from Coral Bay to Long Beach; rooms inside are clean and colourful, with comfortable double beds, mosquito netting and cold-water showers. The attached cafe serves the usual variety of everything.

**Aur Bay Chalet**

LONGHOUSE \$

(Map p284; ☎013-9950817; Coral Bay; r RM30) Small but comfortable rooms with double beds, fans, cold showers and mosquito netting set in a longhouse structure just south of the Coral Bay Jetty.

**Maya Guest House**

GUESTHOUSE, CAFE \$

(Map p284; ☎019-970 4426; Coral Bay; RM60/80 garden/seaview) Twelve fan-cooled rooms on Coral Bay. Leads ecofriendly snorkelling tours around the area and has an alcohol-free cafe.



## Information

There is a RM5 conservation fee for everyone entering the marine park around the Perhentians; this fee will likely be tacked onto the price of your ticket at the jetty in Kuala Besut.

**EMERGENCY** The only medical facility on the islands is the very basic clinic. Dive operators and some of the bigger resorts can offer first aid if needed.

**INTERNET ACCESS** Wireless access is increasingly ubiquitous on Perhentian, and a few spots on Long Beach have internet service for between RM20 to RM24 per hour.

**MONEY** There are no banks or ATMs on the islands. If you run out money you can get a cash advance on your Visa or Mastercard at the Tropicana Backpacker Inn.

**TELEPHONE** There are no public telephones on the islands, but some hotels will allow you to make calls from their mobile phones for a fee. Mobile phone numbers for resorts given here may change from one season to the next, and some have no phones, but travel agents in Kuala Besut will have the latest contact details.

## Getting There & Away

**Speedboats** (adult/child RM70/35 return, 30 to 40 minutes) run several times a day between Kuala Besut and the Perhentians from 8.30am to 5.30pm, although you can expect delays or cancellations if the weather is bad or if there aren't enough passengers. Tickets are sold by several travel agents around Kuala Besut. The boats will drop you off at any of the beaches.

In the other direction, speedboats depart from the islands daily at about 8am, noon and 4pm. It's a good idea to let the owner of your guesthouse know a day before you leave so they can arrange a pick-up. If the water is rough or tides are low you may be ferried from the beach on a

small boat to your mainland-bound craft; you'll have to pay around RM3 for this.

## Getting Around

While there are some trails around the islands, the easiest way to go from beach to beach or island to island is by boat. Chalet owners can arrange a taxi boat. From island to island, the trip costs RM20 per boat, and a jaunt from one beach to another on the same island usually costs about RM15. Prices double at night.

## Pulau Lang Tengah

Tiny, idyllic Lang Tengah lies roughly halfway between Pulau Redang and Pulau Perhentian, and with only three resorts to choose from, it's a much quieter, less-developed place than its better known neighbours.

## Sleeping

The island's three resorts are spaced out on the west coast, and offer a bewildering variety of package deals; unless otherwise stated, those listed in this section are for three days and two nights.

### Redang Lang Island Resort

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎623 9911; [www.malaysiaislandresort.com](http://www.malaysiaislandresort.com); s/d from RM379/609; ☼) Offers basic but neat wooden chalets just a few steps from the beach, with a common TV lounge and karaoke bar. Cheaper rooms have no hot showers. Snorkelling and diving packages are available, and prices are slightly higher on weekends.

## GATEWAY TO PARADISE

Poor Kuala Besut! Though a lovely seaside town, few indeed are the visitors who'll spend more than an hour or two here. Alas, such is the fate of the town whose claim to fame is being the gateway to Malaysia's best-known paradise.

Still, there are worse fates than getting stuck here overnight. The restaurants and coffee shops are all located on and around the jetty (where you can also rent snorkelling equipment – usually good quality – for use on the islands). The town's few hotels are also scattered around the jetty. The best of these is the **Samudera Hotel** (☎697 9326; [www.kekal-samudera.com](http://www.kekal-samudera.com); Jln Pantai; r from RM65), which has large, simple rooms and private bathrooms.

There's no direct bus from Kota Bharu, so if you're coming from the north you'll need to switch at Jerleh or Pasir Puteh. A taxi from Kota Bharu is around RM80. The bus from Kuala Terengganu is RM8, and a taxi will set you back around RM100. There are also two daily buses from KL (RM40, nine hours). Many travel agents run minibus services to Kuala Besut from various tourist hotspots around Malaysia.

**D'Coconut Lagoon**

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎03-4252 6686; www.dcoconutlagoon.com; r RM 465-888; ☼) The smallest of the resorts has fairly plain but comfy chalets with fridges, TVs and other mod cons, set around an attractive pool. These prices are per night, various package deals are also available.

**Lang Sari Resort**

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎03-2166 1318; www.langsari.com; s/d from RM 348/478; ☼☼) Huge wooden chalets look over strings of lanterns, the beach and guests relaxing in hammocks. Activities include canoeing, turtle- or shark-watching, or just napping in the shade.

**i Getting There & Away**

Between April and August, ferries to Lang Tengah leave from the jetty in Merang at 10am and noon, and from the island at 8.30am and 2pm. From September to March they leave Merang at 12.30pm and depart the island at 2pm. If you're travelling independently, the one-way fare for adults/children is RM80/40.

**Pulau Redang**

Redang's position within a marine park lends itself to excellent diving and snorkelling, and you can easily lose yourself in between the golden sunlight, cackling jungle and lapping waves. Unfortunately, it's difficult to visit outside of package tours, which tend to be regimented affairs with arrival lectures and set times for meals, snorkelling and 'leisure'. It's popular with groups of young Malaysians and weekendening Singaporeans.

Note that Pulau Redang basically shuts down from 1 November to 1 March; the best time to visit is from mid-March to late September. There is a RM5 conservation fee for entering the marine reserve, usually payable at your resort.

**🛏 Sleeping & Eating**

Accommodation on Pulau Redang needs to be arranged in advance. Tour companies sell packages for all the resorts, and several of the resorts have offices in Kuala Terengganu. Unless otherwise stated, all package prices in this section are for three days and two nights and are per person, based on two sharing, and include boat transfer from Merang, all meals and two snorkelling trips.

**PASIR PANJANG**

Most of the small resorts are built on a beautiful stretch of white-sand beach known as Pasir Panjang, on the east coast of the island.

**Coral Redang Island Resort**

RESORT \$\$

(☎630 7110; www.coralredang.com.my; s/d chalets per night from RM239/319; ☼) Towards the northern end of the beach, this resort has undergone a major renovation. There's a dive centre attached. A wide variety of snorkelling/diving packages starting at RM585/785 are on offer, including equipment but not boat transfer.

**Redang Bay Resort**

RESORT \$\$

(☎620 3200; www.redangbay.com.my; dm/d per person from RM338/418; ☼☼☼) At the southern end of the beach, this rather characterless resort has a mix of concrete block-style accommodation and chalets. Rooms are neat and clean, if a little Spartan. The karaoke lounge is open till all hours, and there's a 'beach disco' on weekends, so don't come looking for a quiet island retreat.

**Redang Holiday Beach Villa**

CHALET \$\$

(☎624 5500; www.redangholiday.com; r from RM 399, chalet RM499/549 garden/seaview; ☼☼) At the northern tip of the beach is this welcoming place, with a series of smart duplex chalets climbing the rocks (chalets S13 and S14 have the best outlooks). Larger chalets sleep up to eight.

**Redang Pelangi Resort**

RESORT \$\$

(☎624 2158; www.redangpelangi.com; r from RM 379; ☼☼) This is a casual, resort-style affair that offers fairly simple two- and four-bed wooden chalets. There's an on-site dive centre, a couple of shops and a beachfront bar.

**SOUTH OF PASIR PANJANG**

In the bay directly south of Pasir Panjang you will find several more places to stay, strung out along an excellent white-sand beach.

**Ayu Mayang Resort**

RESORT \$\$

(☎626 2020; www.redangkalong.com; r from RM 269; ☼) In seeming response to the high-rise-type hotels that have taken over much of the seashore, Ayu Mayang consists of wooden chalets, more rustic than regal, that give a good Robinson Crusoe crossed with a *kampung* vibe. Room interiors are a bit plain for the price. Three-day snorkelling packages (RM439) include all meals, three snorkelling trips, karaoke and beach volleyball.

### Redang Reef Resort

(☎622 6181; [www.redangreefresort.com.my](http://www.redangreefresort.com.my); r from RM399; 🌳) On the headland, this small budget resort is in a great location, though you'll get your feet wet going to and fro at high tide. The two-storey wooden chalets are very basic but popular with student groups. The better chalets on the rocks are more secluded and have fantastic views of the bay. It also has a tiny private beach and a diving centre, and offers regular promotional packages.

### Laguna Redang Island Resort

(☎630 7888; [www.lagunaredang.com.my](http://www.lagunaredang.com.my); r from RM560, ste RM1420; 🌳@🌳) Redang's biggest resort – a vast, 222-room complex – dominates this beach. It has luxurious sea-view suites with balconies, two restaurants, a diving centre and a full program of children's activities. Buildings are in traditional Malay style (designed by the same architect who built the state museum in Kuala Terengganu). Check the website for good-value diving/snorkelling package deals.

### Redang Beach Resort

(☎623 8188; [www.redang.com.my](http://www.redang.com.my); r from RM409; 🌳@) This place has an arrangement of modern double-storey chalets and boasts a five-star PADI diving centre, a few shops and a regular beach disco, which makes it a bit intense for a quiet escape. The resort's best three-day package is their snorkelling/diving package (RM529/769), which includes all meals, boat transfer equipment and activities.

### Thetaraas Beach and Spa Resort

(☎630 8866; [www.berjayaresorts.com.my](http://www.berjayaresorts.com.my); chalets from RM1078; 🌳@🌳) Formerly known as Berjaya Redang Beach Resort, this is easily one of Redang's most luxurious resorts, offering a wide choice of sumptuous wooden chalets in delightful, landscaped gardens, and an excellent private beach. Personal pampering – spa and massage – are available. The two on-site restaurants (Asian All Day Dining and Beach Brasserie) serve meals all day, but only breakfast and boat transfer are included in the package price.

### Redang Kalong Resort

(☎03-7960 7163; [www.redangkalong.com](http://www.redangkalong.com); r from RM249; 🌳) This quiet place is set among the palm trees in a private bay where turtles often come to lay their eggs. Standard rooms have three double beds while sea-view rooms have two. Various diving and

RESORT \$\$

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snorkelling packages can be booked online; diving packages start at RM589 and include five dives.

## Getting There & Away

Nearly all visitors to Redang come on packages that include boat transfer to the island. Independent travellers can hitch a ride on one of the resort boats (adult/child RM100/50), but in the high season (April to September) room-only deals will be scarce. Ferries run from the string of jetties along the river in Merang. Ferries also run from Shahbandar jetty in downtown Kuala Terengganu, but are less frequent and must generally be arranged via your resort. A schedule for all resort ferries can be found at [www.redang.org/transport.htm](http://www.redang.org/transport.htm).

Redang's airport is near the Berjaya Redang Beach Resort; **Berjaya Air** (☎630 8866; [www.berjaya-air.com](http://www.berjaya-air.com)) has daily flights to KL, Kuala Terengganu and Singapore.

It's also possible to visit Redang on a dive trip from Pulau Perhentian.

## Pulau Kapas

An emerald coated in powder-white sand floating in a blue sea of tranquility, pretty Pulau Kapas has something for everybody. Serene on the weekdays, the island becomes overrun with day-trippers on holidays and long weekends, and actually shuts down during the east-coast monsoon season (November to March). If Kapas seems too large for you, tiny Pulau Gemia (home to the exclusive Gem Wellness Resort) sits just off the north coast. Aside from the Gem, all accommodation is concentrated on three small beaches on the west coast, but you can walk or kayak to quieter beaches if you're so inclined.

## Activities

Kapas is a snorkelling paradise, with the best coral to be found on the less accessible beaches on the northern end of the island and around tiny Pulau Gemia. North of Gemia, a sunken WWII Japanese landing craft, now carpeted in coral, is a popular dive site.

All of the resorts listed here can arrange snorkeling and diving trips. The only dive shop on Kapas is **Aqua-Sport Divers** (☎019-983 5879; [www.divekapas.com](http://www.divekapas.com)); they charge RM110/180 for one/two dives, including equipment. Trips out to the Japanese wreck are RM150, and snorkelling costs RM30 for a session.

## Sleeping & Eating

Though most come to Kapas on all-inclusive package tours, it's possible to rock up and find a place to stay during the week. The aptly named Jetty Cafe, just off the jetty, sells basic staples and serves meals.

### Kapas Turtle Valley

RESORT \$\$

(☎013-354 3650; www.kapasturtlevalley.com; bungalow incl breakfast RM170-360; ☎) Located in a nook on the Kapas' southern end, Sylvia and Peter's Turtle Valley Resort is a hidden gem. The couple's eight bungalows – all beautifully furnished and festooned with colourful local batiks – sit over a quiet, protected white-sand beach perfect for swimming, lounging and even snorkelling. There's an excellent on-site restaurant with an ever changing daily menu featuring an eclectic variety of dishes ranging from Irish beef stew (made with Guinness!) and Thai-style broiled fish to home-made deserts (the cheesecake is excellent) and cappuccino. Meal cost is extra – expect to pay around RM25 or so. The couple also offer free snorkelling equipment for guests. Please note that minimum stay is two nights.

### Captain's Longhouse

LONGHOUSE \$

(☎012-377-0214; d/tw/tr RM30/60/100) Formerly known as the Lighthouse, this superhip longhouse sits on the southernmost tip of the bay. Guest can enjoy art-covered walls, dorm beds bedecked in colourful batik blankets, and a divinely sociable front porch with hammocks, chairs and even an out-of-tune piano. Surrounded by trees, it's rustic but very comfortable.

### Gem Wellness Spa & Island Resort

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎625 2505; information@gemisle.com; r RM260-450; ☎) Perched on tiny Pulau Gemia, 800m north of Pulau Kapas, this resort offers airy wooden chalets, a couple of small private beaches and a baby green turtle hatchery. The spa offers the usual pampering services, and all-inclusive package deals are available. The restaurant is pretty, but the food is highly disappointing.

### Kapas Beach Chalet

CHALET \$

(☎019-343 5606; dm/r RM15-20/40-70; ☎) Also known simply as KBC, there's a choice of rooms here, ranging from very basic 'back-packer' rooms with outside (but private) toilets to more comfortable A-frame huts with TVs. The friendly Dutch owner can arrange fishing trips and barbecues. KBC also has a

restaurant that serves good food and fruit drinks in a chill setting.

### Pak Ya Seaview Resort

CHALET \$

(☎029-960 3130; r RM80) Just north of the jetty, Pak Ya offers eight charming, fan-cooled A-frame chalets with lovely sea-facing porches. They also rent kayaks and snorkelling gear, and have a little restaurant.

### Kapas Island Resort

CHALET \$

(☎631 6468; www.kapislandresort.com; r RM140-220; ☎☎☎) Set among pretty landscaped gardens, the freestanding timber chalets here all have two single beds and a verandah. Cheaper ones, facing the jungle, are more secluded.

### Mak Cik Gemuk Beach Resort

CHALET \$

(☎624 5120; r RM40-120; ☎) This older place has a variety of basic rooms; take a look at a few before deciding. A few are in need of a good scrub, while a few have received a wash down.

### Qimi Chalet

CHALET \$

(☎019-951 8159; r RM80-120) A walkway leads to this small, northernmost collection of huts, on its own beach. Basic indeed, and isolated, but it has a certain castaway charm.

### Kapas Coral Beach

CHALET \$\$

(☎618 1976; r RM80-120) North of the jetty, what this place lacks in character it makes up for in air conditioning and hot showers.

## Getting There & Away

Boats (return RM40) leave from Marang's main jetty whenever four or more people show up.

One good option is **MGH Boat Service** (☎013-915 9748), which offers discounted tickets for groups of six or more. Be sure to arrange a pick-up time when you purchase your ticket. You can usually count on morning departures at around 8am and 9am. The same boats will continue to Pulau Gemia if requested.

## TERENGGANU

With so many amazing islands to choose from, Terengganu's coast is seen by many travellers as a mere pass-through to paradise. Travellers who take the time to explore between paradise-hops will find the region rich in culture, cuisine and scenery that, on the islands, is simply unavailable.

## Kuala Terengganu

POP 396,433

A microcosm of Malaysia's economic explosion: fishing village strikes oil, modernity ensues. Kuala Terengganu is surprisingly attractive despite the number of newly built (with petro-wealth), sterile-looking skyscrapers. There's a boardwalk, a couple of decent beaches, a few old *kampung*-style houses hidden among the high rises, and one of eastern Peninsular Malaysia's prettiest Chinatowns. With seafood-heavy local cuisine and good transport links, KT is worth a day or two in between the islands and jungles.

### Sights

#### Chinatown

NEIGHBOURHOOD

(Map p296) Tiny (but more picturesque for its small size) Chinatown is the most interesting area to explore. There are atmospheric, watermarked buildings and faded alleyways clotting this small neighbourhood, which is centred on Jln Kampung Cina (also known as Jln Bandar). The oldest Chinese temple in the state, **Ho Ann Kiong** (Map p296), is a compact explosion of vibrant red and gold dating from the early 1800s.

#### Central Market

MARKET

(Map p296; Jln Sultan Zainal Abidin) For fish so fresh it's still in its death flop, look for the boats docking at the central market. Besides indulging your piscatorial fix, there's a good collection of batik and *kain songket*.

#### Bukit Puteri

FORT

(Princess Hill; Map p296; ☉9am-5pm Sat-Thur) Across the road from the central market, look for a steep flight of steps leading up to Bukit Puteri, a 200m-high hill with good views of the city. On top are the scant

remains of a mid-19th-century fort, some cannons and a bell.

#### Istana Maziah

PALACE

(Map p296; Jln Masjid Abidin) On the eastern flank of the hill near the central market is the sultan's palace. It's built in semi-tweedy colonial style, but renovations have given the structure a blocky, over-modernist feel. The palace is closed to the public, except for some ceremonial occasions.

#### Zainal Abidin Mosque

MOSQUE

(Map p296; Jln Masjid Abidin) The gleaming Zainal Abidin Mosque dominates the city centre.

#### Pantai Batu Buruk

BEACH

(Map p296) Pantai Batu Buruk is the city beach, popular with families and, unfortunately, litter bugs. It's not the best beach in Malaysia given the strong winds and rips, but it's pretty nonetheless. Across the road is the **Cultural Centre stage** (Map p296); check with the tourist office to see if any shows are lined up.

#### Pulau Duyung

HARBOUR, PORT

(Map p296) From the jetty near the Seri Malaysia Hotel you can take a 60-sen **ferry ride** to Pulau Duyung, the largest island in the estuary. Fishing boats are built here, for both local and international clients, using age-old techniques and tools, and visitors are welcome to look around.

### Tours

Popular tours include day trips to Tasik Kenyir (from RM189), river cruises and packages to Pulau Redang. Going in groups reduces individual rates.

**Heritage One Stop Travel & Tours** (Map p296; ☎631 6468; [www.heritageonestop.com.my](http://www.heritageonestop.com.my); Blok Teratai, Jln Sultan Sulaiman) does tours to the islands, the jungles and around KT.

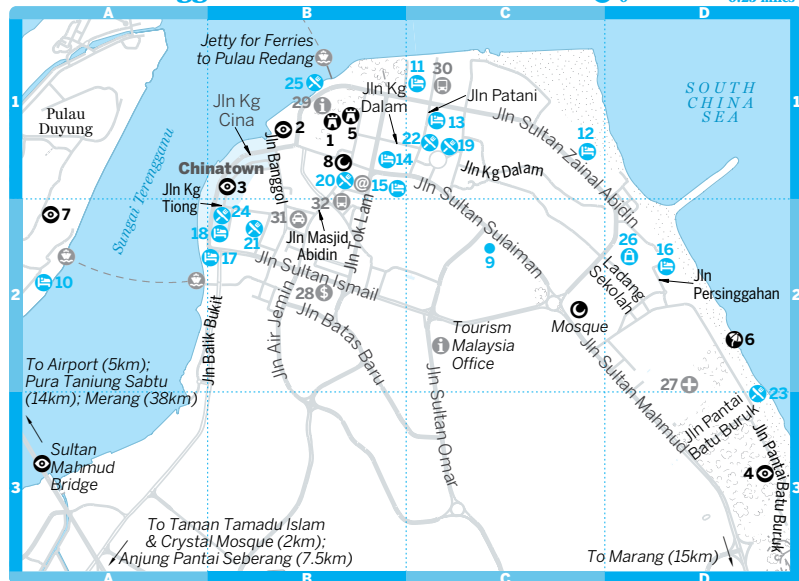
## PING ANCHORAGE TRAVEL

It's rare to find a tour operator as culturally and environmentally conscientious as **Ping Anchorage** (Map p296; ☎626 2020; [www.pinganchorage.com.my](http://www.pinganchorage.com.my); 77A Jln Sultan Sulaiman). Since 1990, Ping Anchorage has done more than talk the ecoculture talk. Every tour it offers promotes the nature, people, culture and heritage of Malaysia while employing village locals when possible (maximising the economic benefit to the community). They also cater to travellers of every budget level, from backpackers to royalty. Check their website for details and prices of current tours offered throughout Malaysia.

The company also arranges island accommodation and *kampung* (village) homestays throughout the country. It also does inland trips. Check the website for details, and for the address of their satellite office in Kota Bharu.

## Kuala Terengganu

0 500 m  
0 0.25 miles



## Kuala Terengganu

## 📍 Sights

- 1 Bukit Puteri ..... B1
- 2 Central Market ..... B1
- 3 Chinatown ..... B1
- 4 Cultural Centre Stage ..... D3
- Ho Ann Kiong ..... (see 3)
- 5 Istana Maziah ..... B1
- 6 Pantai Batu Buruk ..... D2
- 7 Pulau Duyung ..... A2
- 8 Zainal Abidin Mosque ..... B1

## 🚗 Activities, Courses &amp; Tours

- 9 Heritage One Stop Travel & Tours ..... C2
- Ping Anchorage ..... (see 15)

## 🛏 Sleeping

- 10 Awi's Yellow House ..... A2
- 11 Hotel Grand Continental ..... C1
- 12 Hotel Mini Indah ..... C1
- 13 Hotel Sri Tanjung ..... C1
- 14 Hotel YT Midtown ..... B1
- 15 Ping Anchorage Travellers' Inn ..... B1
- 16 Primula Beach Resort ..... D2
- 17 Seri Malaysia Hotel ..... B2
- 18 Yu Tian Fish Homestay ..... B2

## 🍴 Eating

- 19 Billi Kopitiam ..... C1

- 20 Food Stalls ..... B1
- 21 Hawker Centre ..... B2
- 22 MD Curry House ..... C1
- 23 Night Market ..... D3
- 24 Restoran Golden Dragon ..... B2
- T. Homemade Cafe ..... (see 18)
- 25 Terapung Puteri ..... B1

## 🍷 Drinking

- Lounge Kuala Kopi ..... (see 16)

## 🛍 Shopping

- Central Market ..... (see 2)
- 26 Wanisma Craft & Trading ..... D2

## 📄 Information

- 27 Hospital Kuala Terengganu ..... D2
- 28 HSBC ..... B2
- 29 Tourist Information Office ..... B1

## 🚗 Transport

- 30 Express Bus Station ..... C1
- Local Bus Station ..... (see 20)
- 31 Long-Distance Taxi Stand ..... B2
- 32 Main Bus Station ..... B2



## Sleeping

### Primula Beach Resort

RESORT \$\$

(Map p296; ☎622 2100; www.primulahotels.com; Jln Persinggahan; s/d/ste RM280/280/650; 🍷🍷🍷) Kuala Terengganu's biggest option is this seafront hotel with spacious, attractively furnished rooms, including some outstanding suites with four-poster beds and multiple balconies. It's perched on a wide stretch of white sand, and is particularly popular with young families. It has a few very good restaurants and the best coffee bar in town.

### Ping Anchorage

#### Travellers' Inn

HOTEL \$

(Map p296; ☎626 2020; www.pinganchorage.com.my; 77A Jln Sultan Sulaiman; r RM25-65; 🍷) Spread over two floors above the travel agency of the same name, Ping's is a budget standby. Rooms are clean and tidy, with more expensive ones offering air-con and large windows. Self-service laundry facilities are a nice touch, and the central location can't be beat. Even if you aren't staying here, the inn's antique-filled rooftop cafe, which serves beer and food with a spectacular view of the city, is worth a visit.

### Yu Tian Fish Homestay

HOSTEL \$

(Map p296; ☎016-939 9393, 016-938 9888; 214 Jln Kg Cina; s/d/tr/q RM45/50/55/65; 🍷🍷) Run by the same folks who serve excellent eats downstairs at the T. Homemade Cafe, this homestay is right upstairs next to the Chinatown gate. There's a communal area with cable TV, and 14 clean and comfortable rooms with air-conditioning and single beds.

### Awi's Yellow House

GUESTHOUSE \$

(Map p296; ☎622 2080; r RM30) Awi's is (or sells itself as) what Terengganu was: a wooden stilt house, the smell of fish paste, salt and chilli, no air-con and nights that stick to you like a wet kiss. Built over the Sungai Terengganu on Pulau Duyung, don't come here if you don't like roughing it a little, but do if you want a taste of *kampung* life.

### Wan Kay Homestay

HOMESTAY \$\$

(☎019-983 4360; www.wkhomestay.blogspot.com; 1 Taman Abadi, Jln Gong Badak; r/ste from RM100; 🍷🍷) Wan Kay gives you the opportunity to stay with a friendly Malaysian family in their modest but spacious suburban home. The hosts, Beib and Wan, are happy to integrate you into their extended (and extensive)

family, and get rave reviews for their hospitality from travellers. The homestay is tricky to reach independently – call Beib and Wan to arrange a pick-up.

### Seri Malaysia Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p296; ☎623 6454; www.serimalaysia.com.my; 1640 Jln Balik Bukit; r RM140; 🍷🍷) Part of a popular chain with branches all over Peninsular Malaysia, this reliable place offers the standard, comfortable, could-be-anywhere set-up. Rooms are a bit faded and dated, but the lobby and riverside terrace restaurant are lovely.

### Hotel Grand Continental

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p296; ☎625 1888; reservation\_kt@ghihotels.com.my; Jln Sultan Zainal Abidin; tw/tr RM232/268; 🍷🍷🍷) This reasonably swank high rise has comfortable though somewhat ordinary rooms. There's a swimming pool on the fourth floor, and a restaurant in the lobby.

### Hotel Sri Tanjung

HOTEL \$

(Map p296; ☎626 2636; Jln Sultan Zainal Abidin; s/d RM50/80; 🍷) This little option is decked out in over-the-top shades of pink and white, but it is a well-kept place that's quite comfy and just within the budget bracket.

### Hotel Mini Indah

HOTEL \$

(Map p296; ☎622 9053; 60 Sultan Zainal Abidin; s/d RM50/65; 🍷) The Mini Indah doesn't exactly drip with character, but it serves a very clean and functional purpose: getting you a pretty room within stumbling distance of the city beach.

### Hotel YT Midtown

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p296; ☎623 5288; ythotel@streamyx.my; 30 Jln Tok Lam; r/ste from RM98/225; 🍷🍷🍷) The YT is a big, modern hotel in the centre of town with neat, good-value rooms that come with the regular mod cons such as TV, mini-fridge and kettle. There's a decent restaurant downstairs.

## Eating & Drinking

Fish plays a big role in local cuisine, but the real local specialty is *kerepok*: a grey concoction of deep-fried fish paste and sago, usually moulded into sausages.

There are also cheap **food stalls** (Map p296) inside the main bus station; a beachfront **night market** (Map p296) nearby every Friday evening – a great place to sample *kerepok*, satay and sweets; and an outdoor

**hawker centre** (Map p296; off Jln Kampung Cina) in Chinatown, which is divided into Chinese and Malay sections and sizzles with cooking and socialising at night.

### T. Homemade Cafe

CHINESE, MALAY \$

(Map p296; Jln Kampung Cina; mains from RM5; ☺lunch & dinner) Right next to the Chinatown gate, this place is actually a sort of cooperative conglomeration of a few food stalls in a shared space; you can get Chinese and Malay dishes here, as well as clay pots and refreshing, homemade juices.

### Terapung Puteri

MALAY \$

(Map p296; Jln Sultan Zainal Abidin; mains from RM5; ☺lunch & dinner) This busy Malay restaurant is perched on stilts, *kampung*-style, on the seafront next to the jetty. There's a huge menu, with fish, prawns and crab featuring heavily, as well as local items, such as *kerepok*, and a few Western dishes.

### Restoran Golden Dragon

CHINESE \$

(Map p296; 198 Jln Kampung Cina; mains from RM8; ☺lunch & dinner) The Golden Dragon seems constantly packed. There's beer aplenty and one of the finest Chinese seafood menus in town – anything steamed and off the fish list should serve you right.

### Billi Kopitiam

COFFEE SHOP \$

(Map p296; No 5, Jln Kampung Dalam; mains from RM4; ☺lunch & dinner) This smooth little spot, decked out in Chinese vintage movie posters, brews a mean cup of Joe as well as serving up some interesting variations on standards like *nasi lemak* (rice boiled in coconut milk, served with fried *ikan bilis* – dried sardines or anchovies – peanuts and a curry dish) and anything *goreng* (fried).

### MD Curry House

MALAY \$

(Map p296; Jln Kampung Dalam; mains from RM4; ☺lunch & dinner) Sometimes you need a curry and you need it served on a banana leaf by friendly locals. The MD pretty much has you covered in all regards.

### Lounge Kuala Kopi

CAFE

(Map p296; Jln Persinggahan; ☺3pm-late) If you need a bean fix, Lounge Kuala Kopi, inside the Primula Beach Resort, has an excellent range of coffees, including its unique house blend, *kopi de ganu*.



### Shopping

Batik and *kain songket* are particularly good buys in Kuala Terengganu.

### Kraftangan Malaysia

HANDICRAFTS

(☎622 6458; ☺9am-5pm Sun-Thu) About 4.5km south of town, this outlet sells high-quality *kain songket* costing as much as RM12,000 for 2.5 sq m. There's also a tiny 'Songket Heritage Exhibition' showing varying designs. Minibus 13 will take you here from the bus station.

### Wanisma Craft & Trading

HANDICRAFTS

(Map p296; ☎622 3311; 32 Ladang Sekolah; ☺9.30am-6.30pm) This is a batik-dyeing and brass workshop (the largest brass workshop in the country, supposedly) where you can watch the skilled craftsmen at work. The results can be purchased in the shop.

### Central Market

MARKET

(Map p296; Jln Sultan Zainal Abidin) Handicrafts are sold upstairs at the central market. Bargaining is possible here – and necessary to get fair prices.

## i Information

You'll find plenty of banks on Jln Sultan Ismail (9.15am to 4.30pm, except Friday), most with 24-hour cash machines that accept international cards.

**Golden Wood Internet** (☎631 0128; 59 Jln Tok Lam; per hr RM5)

**Hospital Kuala Terengganu** (Map p296; ☎623 3333; Jln Sultan Mahmud)

**Tourist Information Office** (Map p296; ☎622 1553; www.tourism.terengganu.gov.my; Jln Sultan Zainal Abidin; ☺9am-5pm Sat-Thu)

## i Getting There & Away

### Air

Looking more like a Sultan's summer home than an airport, the newly built Kuala Terengganu airport is worth a trip for anyone burnt out on cookie-cutter airport design. **Malaysia Airlines** (☎662 6600; www.malaysiaairlines.com) and **AirAsia** (☎32-171 9333; www.airasia.com) both have direct flights to KL. **Firefly** (☎7845 4543; airport) offers flights to Singapore, and **Berjaya Air** (☎630 2228; www.berjaya-air.com) flies to Redang. All have offices inside the Kuala Terengganu airport.

### Bus

The **local bus station** (Map p296; Jln Masjid Abidin) on Jln Masjid Abidin is a terminus for local buses while express buses leave from the **station** (Map p296; Jln Sultan Zainal Abidin) on Jln Sultan Zainal Abidin. Among the bus companies operating from this station are **Transnasional** (☎623 8384), **MARA** (☎622 2097), **Sani Express** (☎622 2717) and **Ekspres Sutera** (☎622 6299).

## BUSES FROM KUALA TERENGGANU

Destination	Price (RM)	Duration
Dungun	8	2
Johor Bahru	45	8
Kota Bharu	15	3
Kuala Besut (Perhentians)	20	2
Kuala Lumpur	40	8
Kuantan	18	6
Melaka	45	8
Merang (Redang)	2	1
Penang	35	9
Rantau Abang	5	1.5
Singapore	60	11

## Taxi

Kuala Terengganu's **main taxi stand** is near the local bus station, but taxis can be found throughout the city. Regular destinations include Marang (RM15), Kota Bharu (RM80), Kuala Besut (RM60), Rantau Abang (RM40), Merang (RM35) and Tasik Kenyir (RM120). Some long-distance taxis leave from a **stand** (Map p296) on Jln Masjid Abidin.

## Getting Around

A taxi to the airport costs around RM28. Local buses leave from the **main bus station** (Map p296; Jln Masjid Abidin) in the town centre.

The very pretty Heritage City Shuttle Town Bus goes to all of the major sites in and around town and runs through the main bus station on an hourly basis for RM1 per trip.

Taxis around town cost a minimum of RM5. There are also a few bicycle rickshaws plying their trade through town. Prices are highly negotiable.

## Around Kuala Terengganu

Kuala Terengganu is the natural base for exploring Terengganu state. The museums are close in to the city, and Sekayu Falls and Tasik Kenyir are far to the southwest.

## Sights

### Kompleks Muzium Negeri Terengganu

(Terengganu State Museum; ☎622 1433; <http://museum.terengganu.gov.my>; adult/child RM15/10; ☉9am-5pm Sat-Thu) Comprised of a series of interconnected buildings on 26 hectares of

MUSEUM

land, exhibits here range from the historically interesting (a Jawi – traditional Malay text – inscription that essentially dates the arrival of Islam to the nation) to the mildly bizarre (a wildlife exhibit featuring taxidermy that's seen better decades) to corporate propaganda (an exhibit touting the goodness of the oil industry). The complex of traditional houses that fronts the grounds is worth the price of admission. English signage is sparse, however. To get here, take minibus 10 (RM1), marked 'Muzium/Losong', from Kuala Terengganu's main bus station. A taxi from Kuala Terengganu will cost RM20.

### Masjid Tengku Tengah Zaharah MOSQUE

The most famous religious structure in the state is the 'Floating Mosque', located 4.5km southeast of Kuala Terengganu. It's not really floating, just set on a man-made island, but its white, traditional Moorish design is beautifully blinding in the strong daylight, and warmly enchanting as the sun sets. Bus 13 from Kuala Terengganu will drop you outside (RM1).

### Taman Tamadu Islam AMUSEMENT PARK

(☎627 8888; [www.tti.com.my](http://www.tti.com.my); admission RM15; ☉10am-7pm Mon-Thu, 9am-7pm Fri-Sun) Touted as the world's first 'Islamic civilisation park', Taman Tamadu Islam, 2.5km west of Kuala Terengganu, is essentially a series of miniature models of famous Islamic landmarks from across the world including Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock and Mecca's Masjid al-Haram. The highlight of the park is the **Crystal Mosque**. Widely considered among the world's most beautiful mosques, it features a particularly striking steel, glass and crystal exterior. The Heritage Bus runs here, and a taxi will cost around RM15.

## North of Kuala Terengganu

North of Kuala Terengganu the main road (Route 3) leaves the coast and runs inland to Kota Bharu, 165km north, via Jerleh. The quiet coastal back road (Route 1) from Kuala Terengganu to Kuala Besut runs along a beautiful stretch of coast and is popular with cyclists.

### MERANG

Not to be confused with Marang (which it often is), the sleepy little fishing village of

Merang is the gateway to the island of Redang. The beach is attractive if you have to spend some time waiting for ferry connections to Redang, and worth a visit if you plan on checking out any of the resorts around town.

### **Sleeping**

#### **Aryani Resort**

RESORT \$\$

(☎6532111; [www.thearyani.com](http://www.thearyani.com); Jln Rhu Tapai; r from RM369; ⓂⓂ) One of Malaysia's most exclusive hotels lies on a secluded stretch of coast 4km south of Merang. The detached chalets are a mix of Malay and Javanese design, and are spread out in tranquil landscaped grounds just off the beach. All have private gardens and sunken outdoor baths. Best of all is the sumptuous Redang Suite (RM1055), a traditionally furnished 150-year-old Malay house on stilts. The restaurants serve Western and Malay cuisine, while the spa offers indulgent body treatments and massages.

#### **Kembara Resort**

BUNGALOW \$

(☎6531770; <http://kembararesort.tripod.com>; dm/r RM10/35-60; ⓂⓂ) The Kembara is a cheap and friendly place whose plain but homely chalets are popular with the student crowd. There are organised activities and a common kitchen. Follow the signs from the main road from the village.

### **Getting There & Away**

Buses run from the main bus station in Kuala Terengganu to Merang (RM3). Taxis from Kuala Terengganu cost RM35 per car. Coming from the north is more difficult and it is easiest to go south as far as Kuala Terengganu and then backtrack. Otherwise, taxis from Kota Bharu cost RM70.

### **PENARIK**

With its windswept beach and charmingly low-key population of farmers and fisher folk, the village of Penarik is as lovely a spot for a taste of coastal Malaysian culture as you could wish for. But for something truly magical, stick around until the sun goes down and charter a boat to take you down the Penarik river for a journey through the **Penarik Firefly Sanctuary**, where, on certain nights (the darker the better) you'll be treated to a most unusual sight: thousands of fireflies blinking in near-perfect synchronisation. This synchronised flashing pattern is unique to the area. Sex-crazed entomologists naturally suspect mating habits. The night-time boat trip through

the ghostly and ethereal mangrove forest is unforgettable.

A wide range of activities is offered at the Terrapuri Heritage Village (p301) resort, including excursions into local villages and and boat trips to the Firefly Sanctuary and outlying islands. Nonguests can book these same activities through Ping Anchorage (p295), who can also help arrange low-cost homestays with villagers in Penarik.

### **Sleeping**

#### **Terrapuri Heritage Village**

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎624 5020; [www.terrapuri.com](http://www.terrapuri.com); house RM399-RM1099; ☀ minimum 2 nights; ⓂⓂ) To step onto the beautifully manicured grounds of Terrapuri Heritage Village is like entering a set-piece for a film about the lives of the sultans of yore. Meaning 'Land Of Palaces', Terrapuri is equal parts conservation and restoration museum and resort. The resort features 29 classically furnished antique houses painstakingly restored and laid out to resemble Terengganu palace circa 1850 (though all fully equipped with modern amenities). The land on which Terrapuri sits is equally regal, flanked by the South China Sea (with stunning views of Pulau Perhentian, Lang Tengah and other islands) on one side and the Setiu Wetland mangrove river on the other. By night, the flashing of fireflies is reflected in Terrapuri's long swimming pool, and during the summer months visitors may see ocean-going green turtles laying their eggs on the sandy shore.

Terrapuri offers delicious traditional meals and a wide variety of activities. Full details are available on the website.

### **Getting There & Away**

Buses from Kuala Terengganu to Kuala Besut will let you off at the Penarik mosque for RM6. From the other direction, buses from Kota Bharu to Kuala Terengganu are RM15. Taxis from either city are also available.

## **South of Kuala Terengganu**

### **MARANG**

Marang is the jump-off point for ferries to Pulau Kapas. Once a quiet fishing town, much of Marang's seaside charm has disappeared beneath a recent flood of new buildings. It's still a nice place to hang out for an

## LIVING HISTORY: BIDONG ISLAND

As the war in Vietnam ended, millions of Vietnamese citizens decided to take to the high seas rather than face communist rule in newly reunified Vietnam. Dubbed 'boat people' by the international community, many of these refugees wound up in Malaysia. In 1978, Bidong, a tiny island off the coast of Terengganu, was designated a refugee camp. For the next two decades, Bidong served as a temporary home and transit point for tens of thousands of refugees, who endured unsanitary living conditions in shelters made from salvaged materials. At one point, the tiny island held 40,000 people, making it the most densely populated place on the planet. The camp was closed in 1990, and Bidong has since returned to a pristine state. Small groups occasionally visit Bidong for day trips (there is no accommodation on the island); divers in particular are drawn to the fantastic coral landscapes surrounding Bidong.

Trips to Bidong can be arranged through Ping Anchorage (p295).

evening on the way to or from Kapas, especially in summer, when numerous exotic fruit trees are in season.

If you are in town on Sunday be sure to check out the excellent **market**, which starts at 3pm near the jetty.

Ping Anchorage (p295) organises the Marang River Tour, a morning cruise (minimum two people) that brings visitors 6km down the Marang river through a mangrove swamp filled with monkeys, monitor lizards, egrets and kingfishers. The tour stops at the traditional village of Jenang, where tropical drinks made from locally harvested coconut and sugarcane are available. Ping can also arrange meals and longer stays in Jenang.

### Sleeping & Eating

There are a couple of basic *kedai kopi* (coffee shops) in the town centre, near the bus ticket office, and you can also find some **food stalls** (Jln Kampung Paya) near the jetties.

### Marang Waterfront

HOTEL \$\$

(☎618 3999; 21600 Jln Kampung Paya; r with breakfast RM120-180; 🍽️🍷) Breezy and brand spanking new, the Marang Waterfront sits just north of the jetty and has clean, corporate hotel-type rooms with either two queen or three single beds. The bright, airy lobby is festooned with modern art, plants and a comfortable communal space and a restaurant facing the waterfront.

### Marang Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎618 1976; www.marangguesthouse.com; Jln Kampung Paya Bukit; r from RM40; 🍽️) This guesthouse, connected by MGH Boat Service (p295), offers a series of dark, comfy,

if occasionally musty, chalets perched on a hill overlooking the main road down to the jetty. More expensive rooms have air-con. At night, the high-up location and surrounding jungle makes for an agreeably rustic escape.

### Getting There & Away

There are regular local buses to Kuala Terengganu (RM3) and Dungun/Rantau Abang (RM6/4). Though there was once a ticket office in town it seems to have closed down; any of the travel agencies on the waterfront can help you get tickets for buses to Kuala Lumpur (RM35), Johor Bahru (RM35) or Kuantan-Cherating (RM15). You can catch buses at the bus stops on the main road in front of the mosque.

### KEMASIK

Kemasik's palm-fringed beach has some of the clearest water on the east coast. The nearest accommodation is at the gargantuan, five-star **Awana Kijal Golf, Beach & Spa Resort** (☎864 1188; www.awana.com.my; r/st from RM347/601; 🍽️🍷🏊) on the beach around 1km south, towards Kijal, stacked with the usual golf courses, tennis courts, spa etc. Discounts are often available, especially if you book over the internet. Take a local bus running between Kemaman/Cukai and Dungun, or if you're driving, turn off Route 3 (East Coast Highway) at the 'Pantai Kemasik' sign.

### TASIK KENYIR

The construction of the Kenyir Dam in 1985 flooded some 2600 sq km of jungle, creating Southeast Asia's largest man-made lake, with clumps of wild overgrowth gasping over the water's surface. Today Tasik Kenyir (Lake Kenyir) and its 340 islands constitute Terengganu's most popular inland tourism

## SEKAYU FALLS

Located 56km southwest of Kuala Terengganu, Sekayu Falls are part of the Sekayu Recreational Forest, a large park popular with locals on Fridays and public holidays. The falls extend down a mountainside; the main falls are 15 minutes in from the entrance. A further 20 minutes' walk brings you to the more attractive upper falls. There's also an orchard with a huge variety of seasonal tropical fruit. To get here, take one of three daily buses from Kuala Terengganu to the park entrance (RM5) and walk 2km to the falls. The first leaves at 9am, and the last bus comes back at 3pm. You can also arrange a trip through Ping Anchorage (p295), combining the falls with Kenyir Dam for RM99 per person, including lunch.

destination. If you're looking to spend a relatively luxurious night in the local jungle, which houses some 8000 species of flowers, this is the spot for you.

### Sights

**Waterfalls** and **caves** are high on the list of Kenyir's attractions, as are a number of fish farms. These can be reached by boat, as part of day trips from the lake's main access point, Pengkalan Gawi. Book trips from the kiosks surrounding Pengkalan Gawi's jetty, or from the resorts themselves. Perhaps more interesting are trips up the rivers that empty into the lake. Among these, a journey up **Sungai Petuang**, at the extreme northern end of the lake, is a highlight of a Kenyir visit. When the water is high, it's possible to travel several kilometres upriver into beautiful virgin jungle.

Fishing is a popular activity and the lake is surprisingly rich in species, including *to-man* (snakehead), *buang* (catfish), *kelah* (a type of carp), *kelisa* (green arowana) and *kalui* (giant gouramy). You will need a permit (RM10) to fish here, which can be booked independently or through a fishing trip.

The water level varies considerably, peaking at the end of the rainy season in March or April and gradually decreasing until the start of the next rainy season in November. When the water is high the lake takes on an eerie atmosphere, with the tops of drowned trees poking through the surface; when low the lake is reduced to a series of canals through partially denuded jungle hills. The high water is undoubtedly more beautiful, so come in late spring or early summer if you can.

### Sleeping & Eating

Most accommodation is in resort chalets or floating longhouse structures built over the

lake. Resorts usually offer meals and boat transport from Pengkalan Gawi.

Another option is to explore Kenyir by houseboat, which allows you to reach remote regions of the lake, but you'll need a large group to make a trip economical. Ping Anchorage (p295) can help you arrange this.

### Petang Island Resort

RESORT \$\$

(☎822 1276, 822 2176; [www.pirkenyir.webs.com](http://www.pirkenyir.webs.com); dm/r/ste RM30/90/250; 🚶🚶) On its own little island in the middle of the lake, this is a quiet retreat with a choice of comfortably furnished single- or double-storey chalets and longhouse rooms. Chalets have kitchens if you want to cook for yourself, but there's a good restaurant here, too. Camp sites are available for RM5, and you can even rent a tent for RM25.

### Lake Kenyir Resort

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎666 8888; [www.lakekenyir.com](http://www.lakekenyir.com); r/villa/ste from RM380/440/1200; 🚶🚶🚶) Formerly known as Kenyir Lakeview Resort, this peaceful resort – the most glamorous property on the lake – has spacious and well-equipped chalets with balconies overlooking the water or the rainforest. There's a restaurant serving a bountiful variety of Malay and Western dishes and very inviting lounge with a great view of the lake. The resort also has tennis courts, a gym, and plenty of organised activities.

### Kenyir Sanctuary Resort

RESORT \$\$

(☎019-824 4360; fan-cooled d/tr RM100/120 deluxe r/q RM160/200; 🚶) The Sanctuary has 40 rustic wooden chalets, and some of the cheapest rooms on the lake. Cheaper ones are fan cooled, while the pricier ones have air-con and TV.

### Musang Kenyir Resort

RESORT \$\$

(☎623 1888; r from RM140; 🚶) On the shore of the lake, Musang consists of 15



rustic *kampung*-style houses plopped over the waters. Facilities are basic and somewhat rundown, but the setting is beautiful.

### **i Information**

There is a small **tourist information office** (☎626 7788; [www.ketengah.gov.my/kenyir](http://www.ketengah.gov.my/kenyir); ☎9am-5pm) near the jetty in Pengkalan Gawi, the lake's main access point. Also at the jetty you'll find a cafe, a shop and a few kiosks where you can book boat trips. Trips start from RM600

for a jaunt to the nearest islands to significantly more for day trips and fishing expeditions across the lake.

### **i Getting There & Away**

The main access point is the jetty at Pengkalan Gawi on the lake's northern shore. A taxi from Kuala Terengganu should cost around RM120. Your best bet is to book an all-inclusive package from an agency in Kuala Terengganu.

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